

ANARCHY: A JOURNAL OF DESIRE ARMED

# anarchy

No. 74 \$7.00

A Journal of Desire Armed







# Arms and Informants

*Any unarmed people are slaves, or are subject to slavery at any given moment*  
Huey Newton

*Take up arms. Do everything possible to make their use unnecessary*  
The Invisible Committee

*From now on, all friendships are [anti]political*  
Call

SOME PEOPLE CONTINUE, WITH lethal weapons, to act out the insanity of the underlying alienation and contradictory values inherent in industrial class society (allegedly free-market capitalism in the US, bureaucratic state capitalism of China – there was an assault on school children the same day as the Connecticut elementary school shootings, one more in a spate of knife and cleaver attacks that have targeted kids over the

as young as the victims in Connecticut), heavily supervised therapy, and/or temporary or permanent incarceration. These so-called solutions are just more of the same unsurprising statist strategies, only bigger; the typical authoritarian response is an escalation of force and coercion.

What most people don't remember about the case of Charles Whitman at the University of Texas in 1966 – one of the earliest American examples of a mass school shooting – was that after about 20 minutes Whitman was pinned down by return fire from armed civilians, effectively ending his killing spree. More recently, the gang rape and murder of a student in Dehli has led to an increased interest in women there to consider armed self defense.<sup>1</sup> We are not saying that a fully armed population under present conditions is the best possible response to firearms rampages and misogynist attacks; we're just making an observation.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that one of the strategies of revolutionaries everywhere has included a general arming of (at least) workers.



**Bernard Dumaine**

last two years). Not unexpectedly, public debate has centered on more restrictive gun control legislation or diagnosing and treating mental illness through combinations of psychotropic drugs (prescribed more and more often to kids

A dispassionate examination of how anarchists and other radicals have intervened against predatory and antisocial acts in areas under their effective – that is, *armed* – control (the Ukraine and Catalunya most obviously, but also the Paris



Commune and revolutionary Morelos come to mind) shows that such acts were little tolerated, and, more often than not, virtually eliminated.

Regarding the first epigraph, we hold the authoritarian and patriarchal Black Panthers in no particular (anti)political esteem, but their unflinching principle of armed self-defense in the face of police and FBI framing, harassment, maiming, and murder has left a lasting impression on tactical and strategic questions for subsequent generations of radicals and revolutionaries, and not just in the US. It can be argued, using examples from the Deacons for Defense and Justice to the Panthers, that armed self-defense has been an effective method of curtailing police and vigilante abuse in this country; whether it remains effective in an era of increased militarization of the cops is open to question, hence the second epigraph.

Speaking of the Panthers, some rather embarrassing revelations about the person initially responsible for arming and training them in the use of firearms have recently come to light. Richard Aoki, known to some as the Yellow Panther, was on the FBI payroll as an informant starting in 1961. People invested in keeping his memory and legacy pristine are falling over each other in their efforts to clear Aoki's name, insisting that his information could only have been superfluous or of minor importance (nobody can tell since the FBI, in a continual strategy of spreading mis- and disinformation, has redacted everything relating to actual information they received from him), or that Aoki actually became a principled radical from his exposure to the ideology and practice of the BPP and then backed away from informing. Faced with declassified FBI documents, however, everyone has to concede that Aoki was recruited soon after he left the Army and continued to supply information to the feds for the next 16 years.<sup>2</sup> He provided them with enough useful information to remain on their payroll until he asked to be retired – a full two years after he had left the Panthers to pursue graduate studies at the University of California at Berkeley.

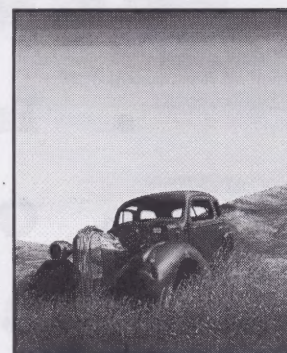
After these uncomfortable revelations, it's up to those who hold him in high regard to defend his now-tainted legacy; denial, deflection, diminution, and cries of defamation are all deployed with varying levels of success. But for

anarchists, not having any investment in the legacy of the Panthers, or the Third World Liberation Front, or other progressive campaigns he helped organize, it's much simpler: Aoki was an FBI informant. End of story. But it's curious that with all the debates around forgery, disinformation, and minimizing the importance of specific information being passed to the cops, the actual issues of informing and spying are rarely, if ever, discussed. This is certainly the result of all the loudest commentators themselves being statist and authoritarians, all of whom take for granted that secrecy, disinformation, and spying are necessary for maintaining control and influence over others, whether they have already attained state power or are merely yearning for it.

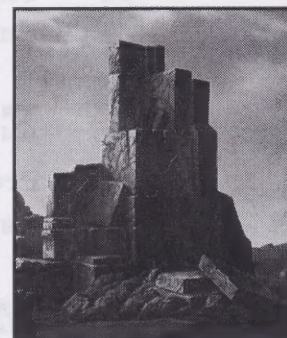
The ruinous results of what's come to be called the Green Scare (the state's use of provocateurs and holding out promises of more lenient sentences if alleged ELF/ALF militants inform against each other) are unfortunate and devastating.<sup>3</sup> These contemporary cases of entrapment and snitching need to remain fresh in our minds, not in a paranoid invocation of a laughable Security Culture (because it is neither secure, nor much of a culture), but to remind us that – regardless of what we may think our impact could be with this anarchy stuff – the state, if they aren't already, will start to pay attention at some point. The importance of developing trust and tight friendships based on real affinity cannot be overstated.

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15-

## On the Cover:



Peter van Oostzanen



Bernard Dumaine

1. [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/01/indian-bus-rape-delhi-rush-guns](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/01/indian-bus-rape-delhi-rush-guns)
2. The most pertinent can be found here:  
[s3.amazonaws.com/s3.documentcloud.org/](http://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.documentcloud.org/)
3. For updates see: [www.ecoprisoners.org/index.html](http://www.ecoprisoners.org/index.html)



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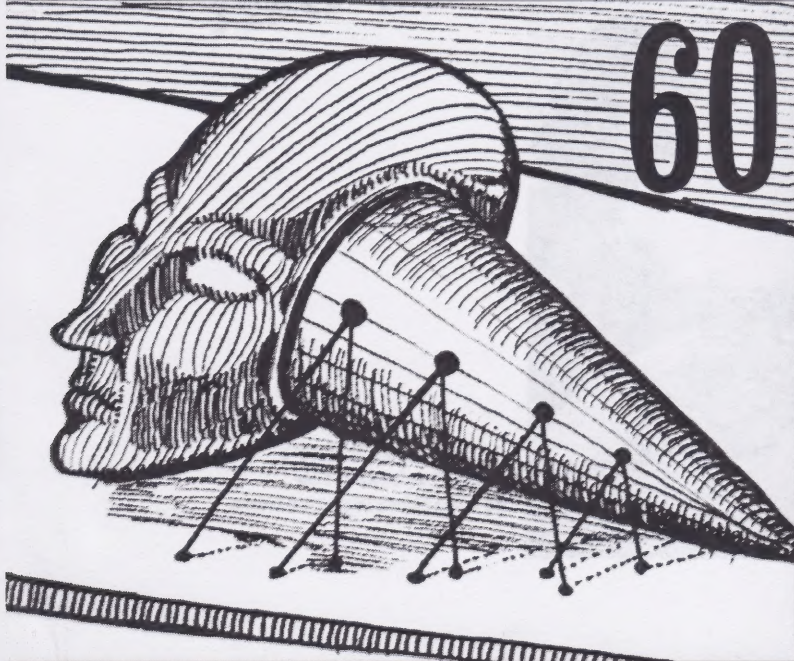
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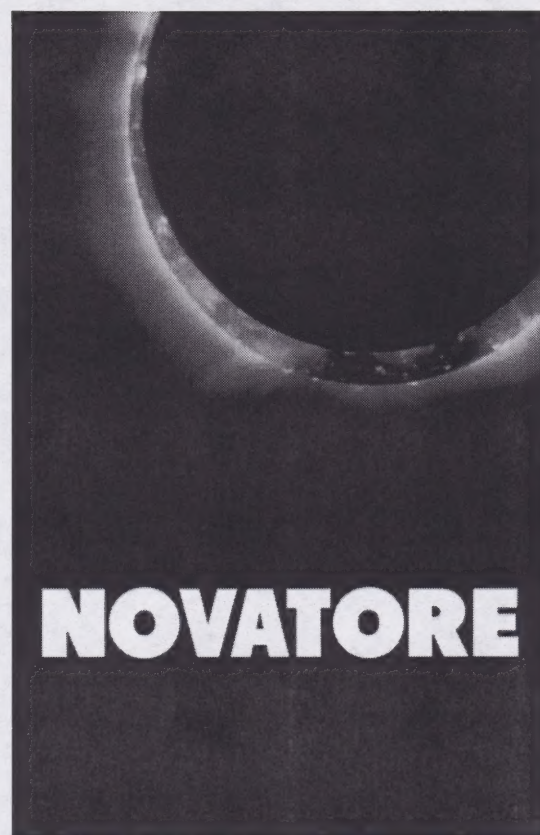
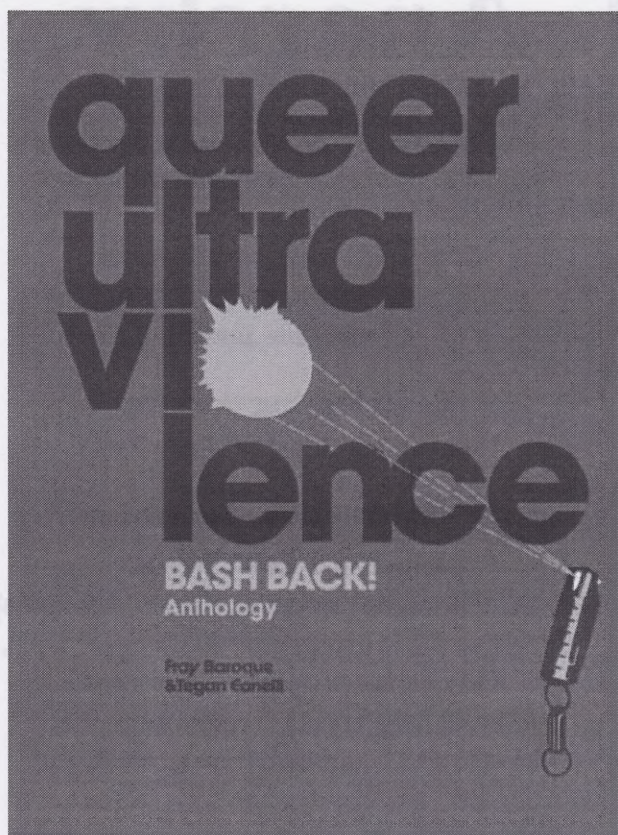
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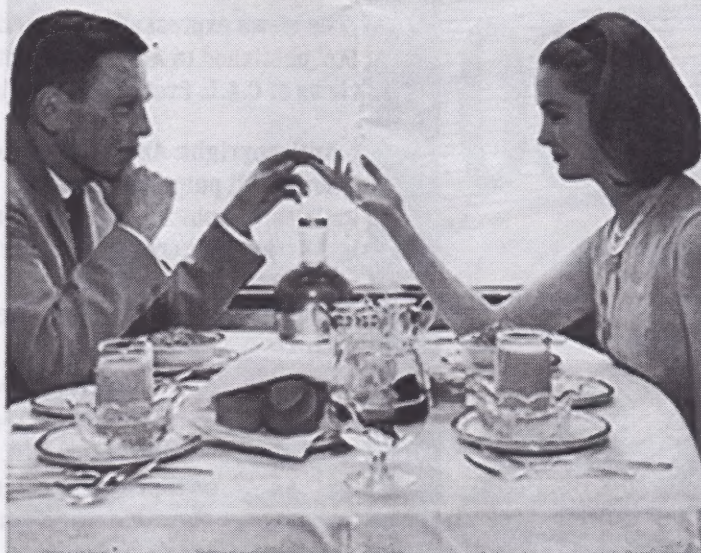
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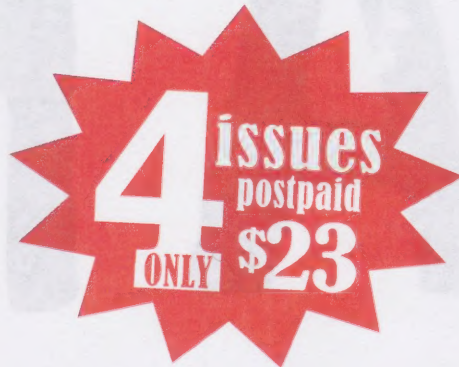
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For submission guidelines contact:

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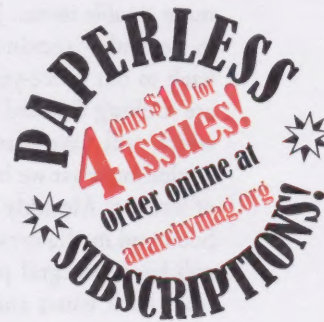
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# INSIDE ANARCHY

**W**ELCOME TO ISSUE #74, THE BEGINNING OF the third (almost uninterrupted) decade of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. As discussed in the previous double issue, we are scaling back our format to keep with the yearly schedule, and therefore will not be producing any more double issues. Jobs, parenthood, loss – life in general – continue to keep us from getting back to our twice-yearly schedule. That said, we are looking forward to relaunching our website, which will have many more interactive features (including what we hope will be a lively selection of forums). Monthly updates are part of the plan; book and media reviews as well as columns/rants will be an integral part of it, as well as reprints from back issues and teasers from current ones. Please contact us at [editor@anarchymag.org](mailto:editor@anarchymag.org) if you think you'd like to join in.

With this issue we would like to welcome Arlian, who has contributed many reviews over the past two years, to the production/editorial crew. We have valued her numerous contributions as a writer, and now she is helping to make important, and sometimes difficult, decisions. We appreciate all her energy and the many times she has prodded the rest of us old codgers to get off our collective asses.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of our neighbor, friend, ally, and colleague Audrey Goodfriend. As mentioned briefly in the touching appreciation by LD, Audrey modeled our previous t-shirt design. She decided to bow out of being a spokesmodel due to not very veiled threats coming from supporters of AK Press in the wake of their vendetta against our project. Regardless, she never let that deter her from associating and socializing with us in public and from being part of various outside projects each of us was involved in.

We had to cut several reviews and an essay from this issue to keep it to a lean 72 pages, but the book reviews will be a large part of the website relaunch, while the essay ("Occupational Hazards: The Rise and Limitations of Occupy Oakland," by our friends in the Anti-Bureaucratic Bloc) will continue to be available as a separate pamphlet (see the subscription information page for ordering details). What may be – at least we hope – a provocative and controversial review is of the Ardent Press book **Enemies of Society: An Anthology of Individualist & Egoist Thought**, which should be required reading for any serious student of anarchist theory.



# ANARCHY

Over the next 70 pages, readers will be treated to the same kind of pointed and critically engaged reviews, essays, and columns you've come to expect from *Anarchy*. We're trying to keep the book reviews limited to current (within the past 18-24 months) releases, while focusing our essays more on the theory of anarchy (not necessarily anarchism – see *Words* at the end of the Media Reviews) mixed in with some history. For the latter, we are honored to be able to reprint the biographical essay on an important theorist and militant of the Mexican Revolution, Práxedes Guerrero, who originated the much-misattributed slogan, "It's better to die on your feet than to live on your knees."

We have decided to list the various projects and periodicals that we have not reviewed, but with which we have exchange subscriptions. Some of them may be defunct; we have not had contact with some of them for over two years. Nevertheless, we remain committed to the existence and dissemination of anarchist print (and video and recorded) media, so if you produce such a project, or are familiar with projects other readers should know about that we have not listed, please spread the word that we are still going against the tide of what many commentators continue to refer to as the death of print media in favor of an exclusively online

presence. Like many independent bookstores, we plan to hold out for what we believe will be a resurgence.

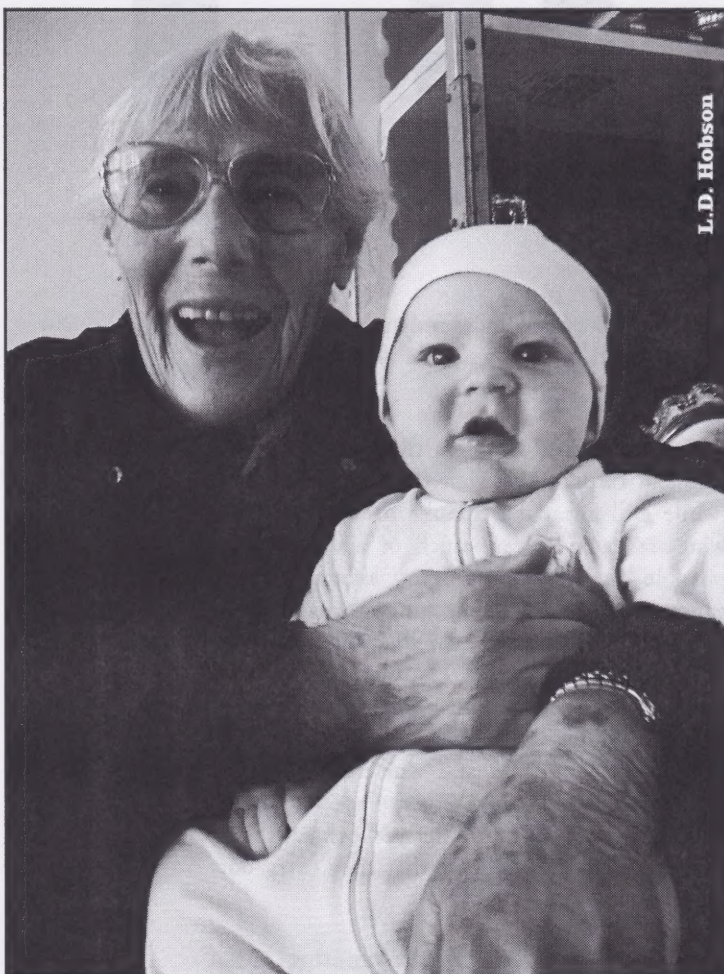
We wanted to decrease the cover price for this and future issues, but the cost of printing (while still affordable thanks to many friends who are extending as much of a discount as possible for their important assistance and support), coupled with the runaway increases of postage, unfortunately make that impossible. As a continual part of our DIY distribution model, there will be a renewed push to get *Anarchy* into local infoshops and independent bookstores as well as municipal and university libraries. Contact us if you know of any place where our journal might fit in, or better yet, contact those places directly and request that they carry our journal.

Many events, both demoralizing (the firebombing of Freedom Bookstore in London) and exhilarating (the emergence of an explicitly anarchist black bloc in Cairo) have occurred in the past months. But since we are not a news magazine, we have nothing written about these or other events that might be pertinent to anarchists here and abroad. We hope our renewed (but definitely not exclusive) online presence will be a positive setting for such discussions.



## Audrey Goodfriend (1920-2013)

**A**UDREY GOODFRIEND WAS NOT A TYPICAL little old lady. One year she opened an event for 8 Days of Anarchy by singing *The Internationale* (out of tune) in Yiddish. She swore and told bawdy jokes. She disliked cooking and spicy food, but brought great salads to potlucks. Audrey was a subscriber and supporter of Anarchy, and modeled our t-shirt in previous issues. When we played the prisoner's dilemma in the Berkeley anarchist study group,



**Intergenerational Continuity: Audrey and Elwyn, March 2008**

she was the only person to “win” by cooperating until the last move. She was sneaky like that.

We ran into each other at the YMCA, where she typically swam five days a week. We danced and threw pennies in the air together at midnight on the New Year, surrounded

by her family and friends. I used her code to visit the local community hot tub, until it was revoked because she gave it to too many unescorted men, which was against the rules.

I will always remember her glowing as she recalled the writings of Paul Goodman. Laughing over spilling her first cup of coffee (it was “very adult”) in Emma Goldman’s living room when she was a young woman – she was that nervous! Telling people to shut up and leave her alone when she didn’t want to tell a story for the tenth time, because there was no one else with personal stories like hers, and no one else could have told them with such a mischievous twinkle. She loved theater and being on stage. She would patiently explain her pacifism, and argue heatedly against marriage. Her mind was sharp, and she never stopped reading, talking, and connecting.

When we talked about being anarchist parents, she smiled and she said her children were good people. She never owned a cell phone or answering machine, but she was at home on Sundays if you wanted to visit. She was on anarchist panels, in films, was interviewed and recorded too many times to recount. Though I don’t think she ever used the interwebz, you can find her name there if you want her detailed history.

After seeing *Troublemakers* at the Berkeley Repertory Theater, Audrey passed in her sleep at home. She told her family the play was good, and that they should see it. Audrey was 92.

An anarchist elder has passed. With any luck, we paid enough attention to keep alive the parts of her that resonated with each of us.


Her six keys to a happy, long, and active life:

1. stay physically active
2. have friends of all ages
3. eat healthy
4. stay socially active
5. never stray too far from a bathroom
6. learn to procrastinate...  
why die today when you can die tomorrow?





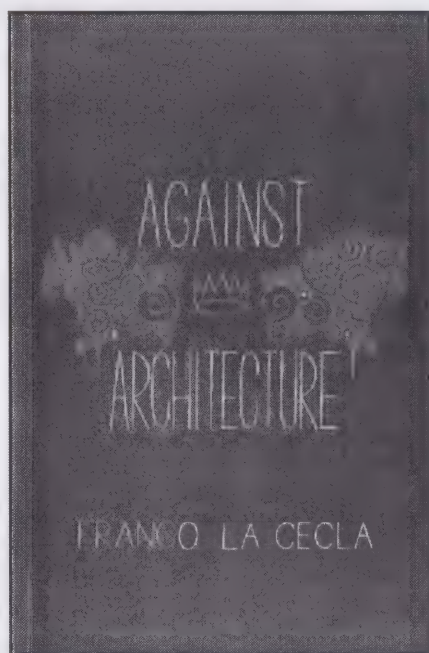
**Audrey with friends circa 1944**



**Audrey and Dorothy Rogers**



# AGAINST ARCHITECTURE



**Against Architecture**  
by Franco La Cecla  
(Translated by  
Mairin O'Mahony;  
PM Press, 2011 [2008])  
144 pages, paper. \$14.95

Reviewed by Arlian

**D**ESPITE THE TITLE, **AGAINST Architecture** isn't actually against architecture at all. Alas, this isn't a critical anti-civ engagement with the urban environment; his titular choice is instead an attempt to engender interest through being provocative, which I think gives the reader a hint as to exactly how insipid this book really is. When La Cecla says he is against architecture, he actually means the *profession of architecture*, not urbanity itself. He says, in a nutshell, that architects should be public servants with the greater good in mind when they are designing spaces. A slightly longer way of saying this:

How wonderful it would be if...City Planners were to confront themselves with questions of responsibility, if they were at least to face up to them...To be "against architecture" nowadays, is to deprecate the betrayal of a practice that should be the keystone of [a] shared, beautiful built environment, is urgent... "Against architecture" because one can no longer put up with the formalism, the tiredness, the fear that pervade...both architectural studies and productions...This book is an indictment against the laziness of a

profession that used to promise a lot and that today is a washout. (viii-ix)

Or perhaps this excerpt is more explanatory:

One cannot do less than renounce architecture because architecture has nothing to do with the substance of the true geography of the present. This book, the umpteenth on lived-in and constructed space, wishes only to make [this] one little point. (4)

Later on, in a chapter titled "Why I Did Not Become an Architect," he admits he actually was an architect for a little while, but became disgusted by the commercial/consumerist nature of the field and quit to become a writer. He was appalled by the unscrupulously disinterested and uninvolved stance that architects take. He says, "Far from representing the troubled conscience of neocapitalist real estate, architects today are, generally speaking, adolescent hobbyists who are selling themselves as public artists" (10).

He continues his artist metaphor, using Rem Koolhaas and his "capitalist realism" (21) as a figurehead who represents a field that is populated



by "archistars" who control the urban landscape: "In short, the architectars are nothing more than the service artists of today's powers, useful for establishing 'trends' to amaze and draw the public's attention with 'gimmicks' that are not even buildings but stage sets..."(15).

He continues:

...The architect is an artist, but in a renewed sense he is more than anything a "trend-setter"... In a show-business economy the artist becomes the key element, capable of producing the setting that the show needs to move forward...The architect doesn't work for fashion, he has become fashion... [he] drops his mantle over the city to make sure it is "his way" (16-17)

For all that, La Cecla doesn't seem want architects to entirely stop being an artist, but wants them to be a different *kind* of artist. "In reality it would be beautiful...if the architects wanted to be a class of enthusiasts for the beauty of the city and for living there; if they were intellectuals who despised the mediocrity, the showcasing, the plastification of everyday life" (10).

Finally, La Cecla cries his little liberal heart out by lamenting, "If we don't want to hear the swan song of architecture...it seems to me essential that the profession as a whole must change. [Architects] must truly become planners of quality of life and of living...if architects want to enter the changing times...they have to consider the city as a whole (105).

Yawn.

It might be a little unfair of me to be so unimpressed, but I just can't care at all about La Cecla's viewpoint, or his book. I don't care to see the field of architecture reformed, and am not even interested in having a debate or conversation with the kinds of people who are. While I am interested in think-

ing critically about the ways space is used, and how our built environments control or mold our experiences with them and each other, La Cecla's critique doesn't step outside of the framework of capitalism at all; instead he's just continually harping on the magical possibilities of a supposedly better city. Basically, he's upset about what Susan Strange calls Casino Capitalism. If you doubt me, see above where he talks about architects needing to represent "the troubled conscience of neocapitalist real estate" (10). But he is even more explicit than that:

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one could interpret the public use of the city as the daily story of a collective resistance to the disembodiment of the city itself, to the humiliation of its body by the band of madmen from Casino Capitalism. And in order to delude itself, the same Casino Capitalism needs to make believe that there is a festival, and its being celebrated somewhere, in the shops, in the shopping malls, in front of shop windows. The problem is that we let them cheat us by their transformation of the crowd's desire for dance and urban ecstasy, into marketing and publicity... (119-120)

He continues, using Manhattan as an example of a Naughty Place where bad, stupid people dwell, saying of it that "the only movement seems to be that of Italian ants scurrying to Victoria's Secret to buy lingerie for their wives, yokels who are convinced Sex and the City is a sexual revolution" (22). He contrasts this to San Francisco, which he believes is a Happy Place with enlightened, good people; where the architects behave virtuously.

San Francisco gives me hope. The architects who I met seem to get it right; there was no need to explain that we are the edge of a precipice—they have already been at work for years on energy and environmental sustainability, on the choice of recycled materials, on the conservation of water, on the total recycling of solid and liquid waste, on a design that condescends to heed what already exists and gives space and power to its inhabitants. (41)

Yawn again.

But to delve back into actual criticisms of this book, rather than just snarky and self-congratulatory potshots, there was quite a bit I deeply disagreed with, even abhorred, in this little volume.

While La Cecla doesn't explicitly say this, he seems to believe that social ills can be broken up into discrete and external parts. It seems he is saying that by fixing the external structures of life the social problems will be healed as well. That might not sound too bad, maybe even reasonable, but look at how he frames it:

...a city influences the people who live in it, the squares, the houses, the streets have an effect upon the way in which the people live, and encounter one another, and that this [ends] up becoming part of the iden-



tity of the people and that people often end up resembling their city. A great Sicilian writer, Elio Vittorini, wrote...that beautiful cities produce "beautiful people" but that ugly cities produce dangerously "ugly people". Beautiful streets or ugly architecture, dehumanized enormous blocks or magnificent pathways among monuments are factors that determine whether the lifestyle is good or bad, whether there is outstanding tolerance among people or conflict and tension. (79-80)

When you put it that way, it comes across as kind of wing-nutty and creepy.

There is another – far better – book that takes the same approach to solving social problems called *A Pattern Language*. The fact that I didn't like this idea any more when the authors of *A Pattern Language* said it than when La Cecla said it doesn't detract from the fact that *A Pattern Language* is everything **Against Architecture** wishes it could be. It's strange to me that La Cecla doesn't reference *A Pattern Language* at all, and thus doesn't seem to know it exists. Even weirder, he seems unaware that there actually has been a city built in Florida based on the very factors he wishes urban planners would consider, named Celebration. In fact, Celebration was built with *A Pattern Language* as the designers' bible – no kidding! They spent almost a decade researching urban design strategies across the United States and compiled a list of things they thought would contribute to a supposedly happy, healthy, and well-adjusted citizenry while still being aesthetically pleasing, and then built an entire city around this idea. To be clear, Celebration is a privately owned city so it doesn't accurately represent *A Pattern Language's* vision, which is clearly stated here:

Towns and buildings will not be able

to come alive, unless they are made by all people in society...You can use [this book] to work with your neighbors, to improve your town and neighborhood. You can use it to design a house for yourself, with your family; or you can use it to work with other people to design an office or a workshop or a public building like a school... (x)

Contrast that to La Cecla's, vision which is about the Professionally Trained Other designing and moderating the creation of space, and you can see that while neither book is

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inherently radical at least one is non-hierarchical.

Celebration is exactly what La Cecla claims to want. To paraphrase, he desires houses designed to be used the way people really live (2), public spaces to be used that aren't only about overt monetary interactions taking place

(87), and pedestrian friendly streets (117). However, the fact is that Celebration is a completely terrifying Leave It to Beaver monstrosity where its designers would entirely agree with the creepy "beautiful cities produce beautiful people" statement. The existence of this city supports my perspective that attempting to manipulate social dynamics by merely changing external structures – especially if you do so while still staying within the capitalist framework – isn't effective.

Too much of what La Cecla advocates sounds like the career-version of voting with your dollars. When he plaintively wonders,

Why don't architects equip themselves differently? Why, when confronted by a client who is requesting a socially disruptive intervention do they not offer the whole gamut of their competency, precisely to avoid the client saying to them: the social aspect is our affair, you get on with the architecture? Today it is to be hoped that all the know-how environmental impact assessment, of ambient impact, becomes advocated by planners, just as it is to be hoped that the value of social impact assessment will also be advocated. (104-105)

Isn't he just saying individual architects have a responsibility, essentially to the world, to refuse to do certain kinds of work? That architects should take a stand and refuse to let their clients bully them into building something that isn't good for the social environment that building is to be located in, instead using their knowledge to give both the client and the social landscape the kinds of buildings and parks and streets that will work for both?

He continues in this vein through the book, declaring architects need to be "more intransigent and more complete" (105). He hopes "architects and city planners, projectors and designers

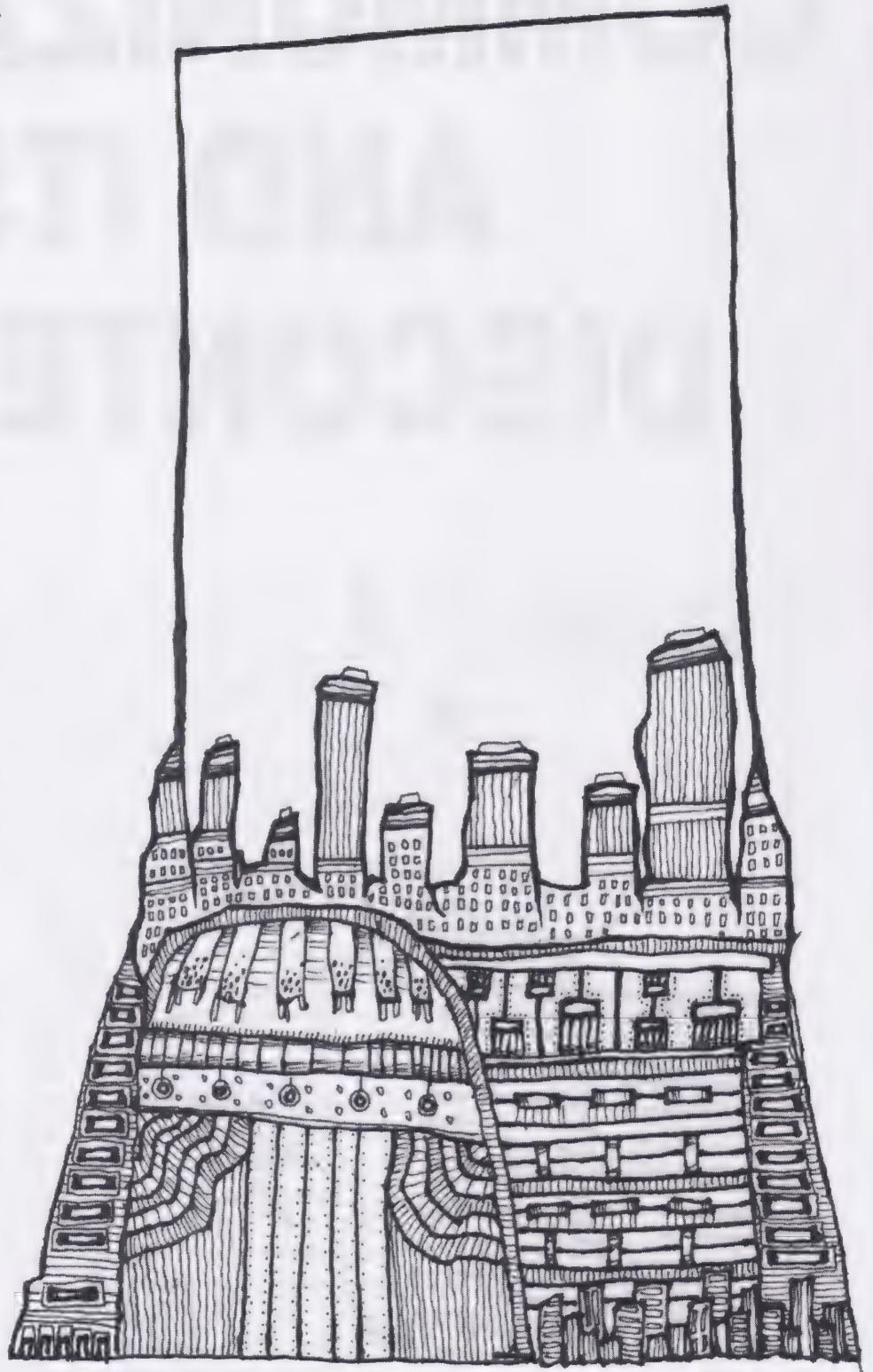


will throw themselves into inventing a new world of living, of streets and houses, of cities and landscapes”(ix). He feels this change should begin in architecture schools, complaining that

[Schools], which could theoretically play a leadership role in reforming the profession, are rooted in corporate interests, either incapable of grasping the overarching problems of urban administration or woefully committed to an obsolete concept of city planning. Architecture students are not trained in the way cities really work, the kind of things taught in any Public Health course in the United States...students are not equipped with the tools to observe, analyze, and decipher the social impact of the built projects they design. (116)

### **Too much of what La Cecla advocates sounds like the career-version of voting with your dollars**

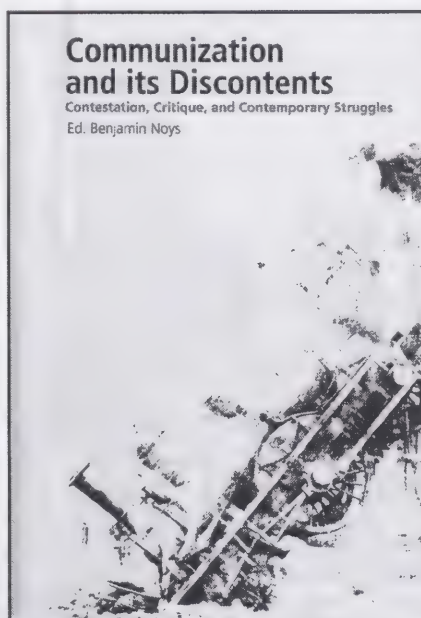
I find most of La Cecla's premises to be ones that I am fundamentally opposed to. His viewpoints center on the reformation of cities and professions, neither of which I support, nor am I concerned with protecting them; His ideas do not include anything about abolishing or challenging or changing capitalism. Since he's fundamentally not a radical (and, to give him credit, he doesn't claim to be – unlike his publishers), his concerns makes sense...it also makes sense for you to avoid wasting your time by reading this book. (A)



Kelly Porter



# COMMUNIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS



**Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles**  
 Edited by Benjamin Noys  
 (Minor Compositions, 2011)  
 280 pages, paper. \$24.

Reviewed by Lawrence Jarach

**A**NTHOLOGIES ARE ALWAYS tricky. The job of an editor includes surveying the intellectual landscape for as much of a similar understanding of the topic as possible, then finding the right contributions from the right authors, and gathering them together in as coherent a manner as possible. This doesn't always work out the way the editor or a publisher might want. Anthologies are always a mixed bag as well, with some contributions making more of an impression and others being totally forgettable. Part of the challenge with an anthology concerning trends in this particular intellectual radical theory is that there are some seriously divergent understandings and theorizing about this communization stuff, both from inside and outside the tendency. Much to Minor Compositions' and Noys' credit, the essays in this anthology span a wide range of opinions and assessments about communization, from unqualified excitement through qualified enthusiasm to qualified skepticism, if not dismissal.

In the past several years, everyone who is anyone in the world of academic radicalism – especially its Continental varieties, and perhaps more dramatically in its French manifestations – has had to have an opinion and a position on communization; it simply appeared to be that important. From the apocalyptic Marxist certainties of *Théorie Communiste* and *Endnotes* to the anarcho-nihilist prose poetry of

**A critique of what might be called *communization in one temporary autonomous zone* inheres in the broader analysis of there being no “outside”**



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the Invisible Committee, some species of communization has been all the rage.

I can't pretend to understand all the intricacies of the Marxist end of the communization spectrum. "Real subsumption" (what one contributor defines as "the submergence of the entirety of society within a self-positing capitalism" [198]) remains as mysterious – as in mystical – to me as it was before I ever heard of it, and I don't ever appreciate the use of Marxist jargon like "proletarian," even if its use is only descriptive of a subordinate socio-economic condition under capitalism. The terminology of economism (regardless of whether or not it's deployed in a class reductionist or determinist idiom) will always remain tainted by bureaucratic socialism, even if the rulers of the different varieties of People's Republics never actually believed their own mythic ideologies, and no matter how many times more radical Marxists repeat that *those* Marxists were never *real* Marxists.

The bulk of the contributors appear to be academics, as befits any published assessment of communization theory. The Invisible Committee and Tiqqun, though discussed throughout, are notable for their absence, as befits their lack of academic credentials. If they had been asked, I believe they would not have wanted to be included in this anthology. Knowing several of the Accused of Tarnac (see my column in #72/73), I can say without fear of contradiction that they are neither academics nor Marxists, and quite adamantly refused to accept what one of the contributors to *CiD* said to them in person – namely that *The Coming Insurrection* and *Introduction to Civil War* are compatible with any sort of Marxist analysis.

One discussion, concerning *Call*, brings up one of the distinctions between the Marxist wing and the non-Marxist wing of communization. In "Reflections on the [sic] *Call*," Leon de Mattis writes about the differing understandings of strategy.

Those who often designate themselves as alternative imagine that in places like the No Border camp at Strasbourg... in squats, or wherever else, moments can be lived which approximate a society liberated from capital, from money, and 'domination'. And that all this can come from an effort of individuals to free themselves from 'bad ideas' that society has inculcated in them. For example, ceasing to be sexist or patriarchal through a series of measures which address behavior, language, etc. Certain of these alternatives are pacifist. Others think that their desires are not compatible with the maintenance of the society of capital and are perfectly ready for illegal or violent struggle. One also finds those who think that only the struggle offers today the possibility of living moments of communism: the al-

From "Now or Never"  
by Alberto Toscano

**S**OME SALIENT FEATURES OF communization theory can be drawn from these definitions [from TC and Endnotes]: the refusal of a separation between ends and means in revolutionary practice; the idea that revolution is directly aimed at the value-form and the capital-relation; the immediacy of both revolution and of the social relations it generates. These propositions stress the radical novelty and negativity of communism when considered in the context of the present. Unlike many of their contemporaries, the theorists of communization, while affirming the historical immanence of communist possibilities against any (overtly or crypto-humanist) vision of communism's invariance, refuse to countenance the notion that embryos or zones of communism exist in the present. This is in many respects a virtue, especially in contrast to the shallow optimism of those who claim we've already won the world, but simply need to shake off the husk of capitalist domination. But the salutary emphasis on communism as the real movement of the destruction of value as a social form risks trading off theoretical coherence and purity for practical irrelevance. The Leninist catechism once had it that there's no revolutionary movement without revolutionary theory. It would be a bitter irony if the refinement of revolutionary theory made revolutionary practice inconceivable. (91-92)



ternative for them indissociable from anti-capitalist activism. The latter will often shrink from the appellation 'alternative' precisely because they fear being assimilated to pacifism. It's in the last category that one could range those who write 'No experience of communism at the present time can survive without getting organized, tying oneself to others, putting itself in crisis, waging war.' (p. 65 [of Call]) At the other extreme a rigorously anti-alternative position can be found, for example, in *Theorie Communiste* (TC), whose concept of the 'self-transformation of proletarians' draws attention to the hiatus which can exist between what can be lived in the society of capital and what will be lived after the moment that communism will have been produced. This leads members of TC, and those who adhere to their theses, to see in every practical attempt to pose the communist question a demonstration of the inevitably 'alternative' character of every maneuver of this type. (70)

Yet there is something that doesn't sit quite right in this. My understanding (which may be more comprehensive since, in direct consultation with one of those responsible for writing it, I made the best translation of *Call*) is that virtually all of the Invisible Committee/(post-)Tiqqun folks take as one of their starting points that there is no "outside" to the domination of capital, that whatever attempts are made to find these alleged alternative forms-of-life in the (temporarily) ignored interstices of that domination are only interesting insofar as they provide some space and time to allow for different ideas of relationships to develop and be played with; they are understood as imperfect and provisional *beginnings*, not as models of a post-revolutionary anti-hierarchical and value-free culture. A critique of what might be

called *communization in one temporary autonomous zone* inheres in the broader analysis of there being no "outside."

Maya Gonzalez seems to grasp this, and the refusal of intermediary or transitional stages that characterizes communization:

Communization is not a revolutionary position. It is not a form of society we build after the revolution. It is not a tactic, a strategic perspective, an organization, or a plan. Communization describes a set of measures that we must take in the course of the class struggle *if there is to be a revolution at all*. Communization abolishes the capitalist mode of production, including wage-labor, exchange, the value form, the state, the division of labor and private property. That the revolution must take this form is a necessary feature of class struggle today. (219; emphasis in original)

Further, because of the immediacy of communization, Gonzalez is adamant about the question of gender (and – if I can be so bold, given what she says at the end of the excerpt – all other forms of static Identity).

Gender, too, is constitutive of capital's central contradiction, and so gender must be torn asunder in the process of revolution. We cannot wait until after the revolution for the gender question to be solved. Its relevance to our existence will not be transformed slowly – whether through planned obsolescence or playful deconstruction, whether as the equality of gender identities or their proliferation into a multitude of differences. On the contrary, in order to be revolution at all, communization must destroy gender *in its very course*, inaugurating relations between individuals defined in their singularity... The revolution as communization has no revolution-

ary subject, no affirmable identity – not the Worker, the Multitude, or the Precariat. The real basis of any such revolutionary identity has melted away. (219-220; emphasis in original)

**For anarchists, the question is always one of power and its diffusion while for Marxists the question is always who wields it**

Unfortunately, she almost immediately reverts to the (clever?) Hegelianism that characterizes virtually all forms of self-conscious Marxism. An at-first-glance irreconcilable contradiction becomes the basis for a dialectical resolution in the time-honored mechanism of algebraic semi-incomprehensibility:

Today, *the revolution must emerge from the disunity of the proletariat, as the only process capable of overcoming that disunity*. If revolutionary action does not immediately abolish all divisions between proletarians, then it is not revolutionary; it is not communization. (221; emphasis in original)

This could also be read simply as devotedly excited certainty, without any particular arrogance or intent of superiority. But perhaps not.

Reading communization theory brings up once again the issue of the historical rivalry (punctuated by moments of grudging respect) between radical Marxists and the more interesting anarchist theorists and philosophers. Anarchists have almost al-



ways been concerned with more than economic exploitation and injustice, while even the most anti-authoritarian Marxists have retained their master's focus on the alienation built in to capitalism, not paying much attention to the other — sometimes older — locations of class domination and hierarchical relations. That many Marxists — especially in the wake of the Bolshevik seizure of state power, the consolidation of Stalinism as the only legitimate manifestation of real existing socialism, and the various accommodations Party Communists have made with global capitalism — have come to accept many of the originally anarchist critiques of Marxism (perhaps through a diligent utilization of Marxist methodologies) is often bewildering to anarchists, who think that since these Marxists are using anarchist-sounding analyses, then they are just one step away from being anarchists themselves. Such anarchists don't seem to understand that in order for Marxists to become something else, they must first decide not to be Marxists any longer...

As Alexander R. Galloway explains the anarchic wing of communization, anarchists can easily recognize themselves:

From the student occupations at the New School, to the political tracts circulating through the University of California, to Tiqqun and the Invisible Committee and other groups, there is a new political posture today... The new mantra is: we have no demands. We don't want political representation. We don't want collective bargaining. We don't want a seat at the table... *We have no demands.* The power behind the 'no demands' posture is precisely that it makes no claim about power at all. Instead it seeks to upend the power circuit entirely via political nonparticipation... (244-245; emphasis in original)

Yet even here, there remains a yearning on the part of many Marxist communization theorists to maintain the categories of refusal within the realm of political economy. Refusing representation could merely entail the longstanding anti-state communist rejection of labor unions without calling into question the practice of having mandated delegates at workers' assemblies. And what are Marxists to make of the idea of "political nonparticipation"? Surely this just sounds like some hippies-heading-to-the-hills bullshit? But for anarchists, the question is always one of power and its diffusion (if not destruction), while for Marxists the question is always who wields it. It is this unresolved analytical question that sits at the base of the rivalry, which has not yet disappeared, and which is no closer to being resolved just because communization theory is so hot these days. *CiD* contains many moments reflective of this rivalry, but also of (if you will excuse the partial pun) commonality between radical Marxists and anti-ideological anarchists.

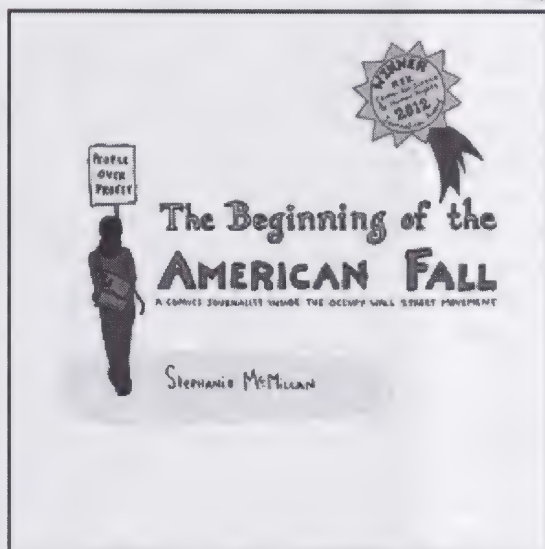
For those with an abiding interest in the allure of rigorous theory with an unmistakably academic Marxist lineage, *CiD* should be required reading. For those who remain skeptical of the ability of the more anarchic theoreticians to keep the terms of communization from becoming nothing much more than trendy Marxist jargon, there are several useful contributions, even if they are not written by anarchists. Having various critics and supporters of communization together in one volume makes for much easier understanding than trying to read the often turgid and incomprehensible TC or Endnotes without any background at all. While not all the contributors' essays are jargon-free, for the most part they appear to be written with a broad readership in mind; for that, the editor is to be commended. (A)

From "Make Total Destroy,"  
by John Cunningham

AS THE ERADICATION OF the very ground upon which the structural violence of capital is erected communization is seemingly the most relentlessly destructive of contemporary anticapitalist tendencies. The anti-productivist seizure of the productive apparatus and the destruction of any notion of the 'proletariat' and 'commodity' would lead to an absolute rupture and break with capitalism... Communization is the negation of all the elements of capital without a transitional 'workers' state', and a revolutionary process which is itself communism. The breaking of the reproductive cycle of our needs being based on maintaining capitalism would itself be an integrated process of the communizing of production and social reproduction. Communization would be an almost unimaginable throwing into question of what production and social reproduction might mean. As such, the destructive moment of communization would be qualitatively different from what's thought of as political violence. Tracing this line of negation in communization might illuminate both communization and concepts of destructive negation in earlier anticapitalist theorizations of political violence, as well as figuring out in what other ways 'make total destroy' might be understood. (196)



# THE BEGINNING OF THE AMERICAN FALL



**The Beginning of the  
American Fall: A Comics  
Journalist Inside the  
Occupy Wall Street  
Movement**  
by Stephanie McMillan  
(Seven Stories Press, 2012)  
144 pages, paper. \$16.95

Reviewed by Lawrence Jarach

STEPHANIE McMILLAN, AN interior and cover designer at PM Press, is probably best known for *As the World Burns* (also Seven Stories Press), her collaborative graphic novel with Derrick Jensen meant as deep political satire, but which came across as naive Sierra Club-worthy pabulum. **The Beginning of the American Fall**—is there a double entendre in there?—is a combination comic book and political manifesto, which is really nothing much more than an amalgam of feel-good liberalism (hence the 2012 RFK Center for Human Rights Journalism Award) and Stalinist Popular Frontism. A fledgling environmentalist from

Florida, McMillan's first exposure to leftist politics beyond polite lobbying came in the form of a zombie from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP) hawking their weekly paper, the *Revolutionary Worker* (2-3).<sup>1</sup> For those who don't already know, the RCP is a hard-line Maoist gang that has a history of ridiculous ideological positions and disreputable practices; their condemnation of homosexuality as a characteristic of capitalist decadence,<sup>2</sup> their cult of personality around the unedit-able windbag Chairman Bob Avakian, and their manipulative engineering and control of various front groups (No Business as Usual; Refuse and



Resist; the October 22 Coalition to Stop Police Brutality, Repression, and the Criminalization of a Generation [with which McMillan worked while she lived in NYC as a member of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade]; Not in Our Name; The World Can't Wait<sup>3</sup>) have made them plenty of enemies among radicals.

If she had ever become disillusioned by her experiences among the Stalinist bureaucrats-in-training in the RCYB, which she “had split off from” in the ‘90s, she doesn’t say. She only mentions “Whatever critiques I might have had of them, being lazy wasn’t one of them.” This is in reference to meeting up with “Permadasi, at the time the main national organizer for Deep Green Resistance” whose work of creating “13 chapters so far since the book came out” McMillan calls “amazing.” “I hadn’t seen that kind of persistence and determination since I’d worked with the RCYB... in New York”(72). Of course the two of them were in the Brigade together all those years ago. Their celebration of the mind-bogglingly doltish strategies of DGR dovetail almost seamlessly.<sup>4</sup> Careful readers can pull some strings together to find a larger thread, however. Pages prior to this, McMillan inexplicably (since previous to this she comes off as a generic anti-capitalist) has a friend looking at his smart phone saying “Elderly Maoists in China – supporting us!” (46) and then in response to her icon saying “Are you crying?” he says “I can’t help it” (47). I had to look back at the previous two or three pages to see if there was an Old-New Left segue I had missed. Not really; there was some nebulous mention of international solidarity for Occupy. So I turned back to the “elderly Maoist” reference, and it got me thinking about McMillan the author, and her political agenda – which would only become more clear much later in the book. Was she nostalgically

referencing the same elderly Maoists who, during the Great Leap Forward of Stalinized hyper-industrialization (1958-61), built some of the most devastating dam projects the world has ever seen?<sup>5</sup> Is McMillan the environmental activist really that ignorant of such anti-ecological policies? Are these the same Maoists who, in 1989, ordered the lethal militarized clearing of the occupation of Tienanmen Square? The same Maoists who, from September through December of 2011 (during the height of Occupy Wall Street), were laying siege to the village of Wu-kan? Doesn’t this bother McMillan the

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supporter of Occupy? The opportunism and myopia of ideologues in general, and Maoist ideologues in particular, is quite shameless.

A bunch of more or less famous people litter the pages of this comics journal in a nauseating display of name-dropping: satirical political cartoonist Ted Rall; professional progressive pediatrician Margaret Flowers; frenetic anti-Black Bloc slanderer Chris Hedges; Starhawk; elderly Maoists; another RCYB comrade of McMillan’s and member of the Kasama

Project Jed Brandt; the general staff of Deep Green Resistance; Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund attorney Thomas Linzey; Maoist fellow-traveler Arundhati Roy; the aforementioned RCYB veteran Permadasi; Kasama Project<sup>6</sup> leader Mike Ely; ISO off-Broadway actor Brian Jones. The dominant trend here is obvious. Liberals and leftists ripe for hooking into a Maoist-organized colonization of the more radical (outside of Oakland?) Occupy activists.

While McMillan acknowledges the Occupy phenomenon is “heavily influenced by anarchism,” it’s clear she isn’t, and indeed has no real sympathy for our ideas. When she states “Leaders always emerge organically from collective activities, whether that fact is acknowledged or not. The way to avoid a problematic concentration of power or bureaucratization is to make sure each person is encouraged to participate to her or his fullest ability, and to stretch this to the maximum,” she’s not saying anything groundbreaking, but it is a little odd for a Maoist – unless that Maoist’s agenda is primarily geared toward the creation of an Intermediate Organization (see footnote 4). Then her continuation of that thought starts to make more sense: “it requires a friendly atmosphere where ideas are not shot down through sectarian labeling... or competition between people who value their own prestige and being right over the development of the collective” (14). Maoist agendas are fundamentally different from those of anarchists and other authentic radicals; they do not make trustworthy allies. So if we already know that, the statement about how to avoid bureaucratization rings hollow, if it’s not completely unbelievable.

Perhaps the clearest example of this difference is her analysis of the state. It comes in the midst of her analysis of global capitalism that she presented



at an all-day ecological conference, where Jensen would interview six people (three of whom are part of DGR – nothing like a little in-house captive audience self-promotion). In the introduction to the text of her presentation McMillan states:

My desire during the last few years has been to build the “red-green bridge” – to bring class consciousness into the environmental movement, and eco-consciousness (biocentrism) to socialists, communists, and others on the left. Earth at Risk would likely be a great chance to reach many radical environmentalists, so I decided that my talk would focus on making these links. For the first part, I described how capitalism works as a system, intertwining the exploitation of labor and extraction of resources in an omniscidal process that can't stop growing. In the second part, I focused on the importance of making strategic alliances between various struggles, in order to destroy capitalism.

Her analysis of capitalism is old-school Marxist-Leninism (that is, Stalinism), right down to the backwards understanding of imperialism. McMillan: “[The capitalists] must force open and seize control of more markets. This is one of the driving forces for imperialism. When more than one country does this, major inter-imperialist conflicts ensue” (61). Typical for Leninists, McMillan elides the role of the state in creating such conflicts, as if capitalists have military forces capable of creating the conditions for imperialism at their disposal. Readers have to wait until the next page to get any idea that there are states at all! “The sole purpose of the state is to keep the flow of capital running smoothly. It administers and regulates the process with its government and legal system. It

enforces it with its military, police, prison complex, and security apparatus” (62). That's all she has to say about the state; it exists solely to facilitate the legal flow of resources and profits to capitalists. Wow. Is it any wonder that anarchists and Leninists don't get along? Is it any wonder that Leninists (and most other Marxists) have allowed Engels' absurd idea of the withering away of the state to continue to hold ideological – not to mention tactical and strategic – traction over their practice? Once the Revolutionary Organization captures state power

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and dismantles the flow of resources and profit (we can leave the question of the Party becoming the new capitalist class to another time/place), the brutal functions of the state are supposed to become obsolete. For Engels again, this would be the replacement of the state being rule over people into the state as the administration of things (by which he clearly meant an economy, but a

socialist one).

The notion that state bureaucrats might engineer imperialist adventures either as distractions from domestic turmoil or merely to extend and consolidate a security apparatus – all in the name of patriotism, the first refuse of the scoundrel, escapes those who remain loyal to statist ideologies. The lack of any analysis of the function of the state beyond being the facilitator of capitalism showcases one of the many limitations of Marxism. It used to be that almost every honest Marxist (if one was lucky enough to encounter one!) would say that their ultimate goal was a classless, stateless society. With the bureaucratic innovations of Stalinism (of which Maoism is a subheading), the goal became merely the expropriation (*not quite* the abolition) of private property. All the varieties of Stalinism in power maintain(ed) the other defining aspects of capitalism: wage labor; the production, circulation, and consumption of commodities; an enforced medium of exchange; and markets (both domestic and foreign).

McMillan is a straight-up Maoist. I do not say this merely as a facile insult – although it certainly is – but more as a descriptive warning. However, in writing this annoying little book, she has inadvertently performed quite a useful service to anyone who hasn't encountered this particularly nasty brand of Marxism before and who is therefore unfamiliar with the various strategies and tactics they use when trying to attain positions of influence within activist groups they start or those they wish to control. She outlines (and at times is quite explicit about) what they want and how they plan to reach their various goals, especially in the appendices. She shows how little Marxist-Leninists have



in common with anti-state radicals, and how little they actually promote that is recognizable as anything anarchists and other authentic revolutionaries would find interesting and appealing. **A**

## Endnotes

- 1 In 2005, the paper's name was changed to *Revolution*; the Party website states: "[W]e believe that the new name more fully reflects our revolutionary communist ideology and politics, and the enriched vision of a tribune of the people that has been pioneered by RCP Chairman Bob Avakian." Less unintentionally funny, and more obviously, it more fully reflects an implicit acknowledgement of the complete failure of the Party cadre to have any noticeable (positive) impact among actual working people, despite forty years of being sent into the industrial workforce to bring the Good Word of Chairman Bob to the benighted and ignorant proles.
- 2 The Party's official position was altered in the early 2000s; re-education camps are no longer invoked as a part of the solution to the homosexual problem, and the defense of LGBTQ people against right-wing attack is now promoted. But 25 years of homophobic indoctrination doesn't disappear just because the hierarchs in the Party decree a change in policy. An authoritarian condescension – and not just toward queers – still operates at all levels of the Party, from the papersellers to the upper cadre. Toleration is not the same as acceptance, and has precious little in common with questioning sexual preference or gender as a location of (static) Identity. In this way, the RCP is much closer to the fundamentalist Christians it pretends to oppose: "hate the sin, not the sinner."
- 3 At the same time they create resentment and enmity among more democratically minded activists who at least pay lip service to some form of decision-making transparency, RCP front group organizers (like the best missionaries) have managed to hoodwink plenty of idiot activists who cannot see how they are being manipulated because of the overriding importance

of the Good Work they believe they're involved in.

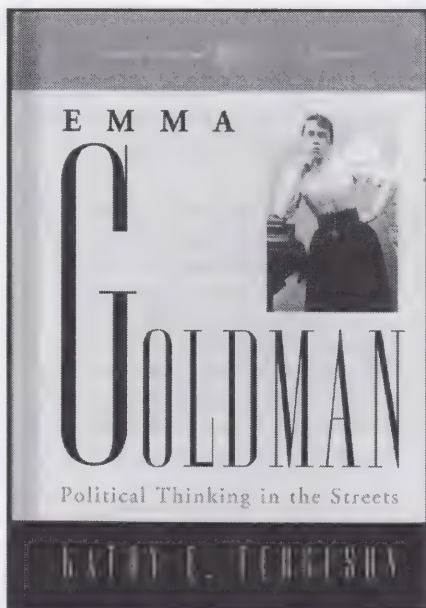
- 4 Deep Green Resistance is an explicitly hierarchical, triple-tiered organization with plans for a clandestine paramilitary wing, based on the organizational models of the IRA and the ANC – and we've seen what stellar policies those outfits have implemented once in power (to say nothing of how they've dealt with internal dissent all along). The similarities of the DGR model to that promoted by McMillan's One Struggle as reflected in their document "Toward an Anti-Capitalist/Anti-Imperialist Mass Movement: Organizing at the Intermediate Level" are obvious. One Struggle promotes a tripartite structure as well: there's the Revolutionary Organization, which is characterized by "A high level of theoretical, ideological, and political unity" – what we might call The Party; the Mass Organization, which maintains "Unity based on common interests to achieve a specific goal (such as a union fighting for higher wages, or a coalition to stop a war)" – which we could call The Coalition; and the Intermediate Organization, where there's "A level of unity that defines and opposes the system as a whole, yet refrains from defining a specific strategy for eliminating it (thus is able to embrace members with various theories)" – what we might call the Popular Front (131), which must incorporate segments of an allegedly progressive middle class! In any case, what DGR and One Struggle most notably share is a structure based on ideological conformity and organizational discipline, with distinct initiatory levels and a strict division of labor. The attraction DGR holds among animal and earth liberation types is based on a similar organizational fetishism that neo-Plat-formists have among anarchists. DGR's leaders decry the "ineffectiveness" of the decentralized and self-organized ALF and ELF; this "ineffectiveness" frightened non-human animal exploiters (primarily in the pharmaceutical and biomedical industries) so much that they pressed Congress to pass the Animal Enterprise Terrorist Act (2006) to augment the Animal Enterprise Protection Act (1992). The two more famous of the DGR troika, the political chameleon Derrick Jensen (who voluntarily contacted the FBI after he received an alleged death threat from an alleged radical) and the militantly transphobic anti-vegetarian Lierre Keith (who voluntarily called the cops after she was pied by some outraged vegans at the

SF Anarchist Bookfair a few years back – and no, it was *not* laced with pepper spray, hot sauce, cayenne powder, or any other chemical agent), have flirted with radicals for years: Jensen by his previous association with *Green Anarchy*; Keith by her association with PM Press – do we detect a pattern there? Even without their independent running to the cops, neither of them should be confused with any recognizable type of anti-authoritarian.

- 5 "Big dams built hastily during the Leap included the Banqiao and Shinnantan in Henan province at Zhumadian, which broke catastrophically in August 1975, resulting in the deaths of 86,000 people according to the government, to 230,000 (an estimate by Chinese opponents of big dams)." (*Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* by Judith Shapiro, p. 63). For another example of the environmental disaster represented by new/old Maoists, see <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2013/01/ban-on-nu-river-dams-washed-away/>
- 6 The Maoist Kasama Project, formed in 2007 as a minority split from the faltering RCP, and is primarily made up of those who were unhappy with Avakian's "New Theoretical Synthesis" and his increased [!?] dogmatism. Their aim is a "reconception" of revolutionary theory and the role of the revolutionary organization (see footnote 4 for McMillan's description), and in doing so they pretend to be non-dogmatic, saying they are open to listening to people from other political traditions. Their support for the electoralist anti-Indian nationalists (disguised as a struggle against Indian capital) of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist should automatically remove them from being considered radical.
- 7 Occupy Oakland, while tolerant of the presence of individual members of the RCP and the ISO as well as the occasional Uhuru House homophobe or ANSWER shill, did not accept any official organizational presence of any of the usual leftist alphabet soup outfits. On May Day, the RCP tried to involuntarily enlist marchers in their pageant of Maoist nonsense; in a spontaneous extension of the welcome a few of us gave them at an earlier SF Anarchist Bookfair, some anarchists (deniers of free speech, unlike the elderly Maoists who constantly shut down the interwebz in China) decided to soak a few of them with beer and water.



# Emma GOLDMAN



**Emma Goldman: Political Thinking in the Streets**  
by Kathy E. Ferguson  
(Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011)  
349 pages, cloth. \$50

Reviewed by Arlian

**T**HIS EXHAUSTIVE BOOK IS AN attempt by an academic to “use the resources of contemporary political theory to re-frame Goldman’s political thinking” (5). I found the premise quite intriguing, though as I went along it didn’t quite live up to my hopes. Don’t get me wrong – Ferguson’s book is quite good and very enjoyable, definitely better than standard academic fare, but it’s still quite obviously a book by an academic for academics, and not written by or for anarchists.

Ferguson tells us the purpose of her writing this book is to “encounter and assess Emma Goldman as a political thinker” (3) and to rethink, review, and reinvent traditional historical interpretations of Goldman. This is, broadly speaking, a goal I am particularly fond of. Specifically she is attempting to place Goldman “not within the dualism of philosopher vs activist,” but instead show that “thinking and acting were not separate political moments for Goldman, her thinking was intertwined with acting, it was a kind of acting” (6). To put it a different way: instead of asking if Goldman was a theorist or an activist, we could ponder what her theory, her thinking, helped her accomplish. Each chapter attempts to look at a specific aspect of

Goldman’s life, and then tries to re-frame our perceptions around it. For example, when looking at Goldman’s love life, we could ask if her relationships and actions lined up with her theory, or we could ask what were the “consequences of her parallel loves for her partners and her revolutions” (15).

**Ferguson’s book is quite good and very enjoyable, but it’s still quite obviously a book by an academic for academics**

Ferguson hopes to use what she calls “ectopic political theory,” (6) or more clearly, socially located theory, to help shape the lens through which we should view Goldman. Ferguson explains that this kind of theory is “theory out of place” (6), that it “makes one think more about the places themselves and our ways of being in them...[that] in order to understand the roles that [people] played in their worlds, those



worlds themselves must be theorized" (68). To do this, Ferguson collects the work of various (extremely interesting) theorists. She references Deleuze, Nietzsche, Judith Butler, Stirner, Foucault, and many others. But Ferguson doesn't stop there. She does an astounding amount of legwork, doing her own research to catalog data that shows the social framework Goldman was working within. In fact, it took Ferguson 15 years to write this book, largely I believe due to the thoroughness of her research. She creates, among other things, a map of all the places Goldman visited on her speaking tours, lists of all the acts of police brutality in America in one year, a list of anarchist journals produced in America...in fact, she complies so much data that some of it can't even fit into the book, but instead has to go on a companion website for the book – like the list of 800 known anarchist women during Goldman's time. The reader is simply bowled over by the amount of work done to put Goldman in a social context.

Despite the potential data-overload that could occur had a lesser writer tackled the subject, I still remained interested, even after looking over page after page of bullet-pointed lists. The same can be said of Ferguson's use of high theory. Even though she works in some notoriously confusing theorists (like Deleuze) and some obscure theory words (like *sensorium*, *bodily habitus*, and *social imaginaries* to name a few that piqued my curiosity), she manages to write in clear, easy to read prose, and thoroughly explains each term before going on to use it – and without ever becoming repetitive, condescending, or pedantic. Fortunately, Ferguson's writing remains accessible, even to the most casual reader. For an academic, her treatment of Goldman's life manages to be decently nuanced, sensitive, and complex, though her



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personal opinions and interpretations of certain aspects of Goldman's life and theory are bound to be boring, liberal, reformist, and all-around annoying to anyone with anarchist sensibilities. While the author tells us her real goal is to reassess Goldman's place in history, her handling of the subject only reinforces her belief in the fundamental importance of the self-appointed Definers of History: academics.

My distrust of Ferguson's role as an academic will come as no surprise to either readers of this journal or indeed to Ferguson herself. In fact, Ferguson directly addresses expected anarchist skepticism, saying "Readers who are anarchists will likely find my use of what is often called 'high theory' suspicious..."(7) She then goes on to quote several different anarchists giving various reasons for our disdain for theory. But, she says that while she "respects [our] concerns"(7) she feels political theory is "necessary and exhilarating [because it] does its work by putting an event or an idea into a different language, conceptualizing it outside the given dimensions in which the idea or even initially appeared, so as to highlight new possibilities for thinking [on] its significance"(7). Alas, even her attempt to address anarchists directly shows her failure to understand the complexity of our political analysis.

True to her ectopic theory roots, before Ferguson gets down to the nitty-gritty of her topic, she first sets the stage for us, telling us the general consensus in the field of political science on Goldman's role as a theorist. Ferguson quotes, at length, various and numerous people who have dismissed Goldman as an original theorist, instead calling her ideas a synthesis – that is, a blend of others' theory, picked apart and cobbled together, to be refashioned into something uniquely Goldman. Ferguson thinks of this as a good thing, or at



least a thing worth considering and not dismissing out of hand (thus her reason for writing this book). However, she tells us that "in the field of political science, questions about a writer's status as a political thinker often raise the issue of whether or not that person belongs in the canon." She lets us in on the little secret that is eye-rolling obvious to any anarchist: "Goldman is manifestly not usually included in the canon, as a glance at the syllabi for required courses in the history of political theory" will tell us. Yet she makes it clear that, while she feels some people have usefully contested Goldman's exclusion from the western canon, she wants to stay away from questions that must have a yes/no answer, (yes, she belongs in the canon, no she does not; was she or wasn't she a real theorist), because they "tend to confine inquiry to a defensive" position. Instead, she "hopes to duck [those] question[s], or at least approach [them] differently, by exploring how she did the work of political thinking and leaving open the question of where she should be located in our intellectual and political histories." She tells us

rather than frame our inquiry as one of synthesis vs creativity...a better question than "was she original" could be "is her thinking useful?" Rather than apologizing for her as a less than serious theorist we could follow Goldman's encounters with beloved ideas and formative events...and see where the trail takes us, whether it allows us to end up somewhere worthwhile" (7-8).

Ultimately, she hopes to "contest the implicit dualism between theory and practice," and she does, telling us that "the theory/practice dyad implicitly calls on a rather formal



understanding of political theory as a systematic, abstract philosophy integrating metaphysical, epistemological, and political questions into a coherent whole." She points out several theorists – theorists who are included in the "most heavily trafficked tradition of political theory" (5), the western canon – who don't fit this definition, namely Machiavelli, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and

Benjamin.

To understand my problem with this, let's pause for a second and go back to Ferguson's end-goal: the point that she is trying to convey. On the one hand, she is telling us we ask the wrong questions about Goldman. By reframing those questions, she hopes to illuminate different possible perspectives and motives, giving us a different opinion of Goldman, the world in which she



lived, and finally, the roles she played and way she related to her world. But to whom is she trying to illuminate these different possibilities? Not only is Ferguson a liberal-reformist-academic, but her intended audience must be as well because those are the only people who would be challenged by some of the viewpoints brought up in this book. That is to say, Ferguson's handling of the topic Goldman's life is so thoroughly controlled by her own opinion as to be largely distasteful and two-dimensional to most serious anarchists.

Ferguson's discussion of Goldman's place in the western political canon is the perfect example of her failure to broaden her own question-asking horizons. While she references people who are critical of Goldman's exclusion from the canon, she doesn't express any criticism of the existence of the canon itself. While I could launch into criticisms of it, most of those comments would be old-hat to most anarchist readers, and more importantly the point is not my personal opinions of the canon, but where Ferguson falls in that argument and how her position informs her opinions and the tone of the book. As stated above, Ferguson tells us she is going to avoid the polarized question of whether Goldman does or doesn't belong in the canon, but what if Ferguson instead had tackled the question from a different angle, one where a rejection of the concept of the canon itself was fundamental to her argument? Central to all of her questions is the idea that certain concepts of academic life are important and worth protecting. Yes, referencing people who want to reform the canon is marginally better than no criticism of it at all, yet reforming the canon is, by definition, reformist. Since anarchists are already skeptical of the importance of the western canon, or of any canon, we're generally not arguing

over whether or not Goldman belongs in one. Instead, by rejecting the canon out of hand – and the linear narrative of society that it represents – we're writing our own histories, even questioning the validity of the concept of history itself. Ultimately we are already defining for ourselves our own heroes and the importance of their struggles to us. Even by reforming the canon to include a wider array of perspective, its very existence would still reinforce a dynamic of which anarchists are skeptical.

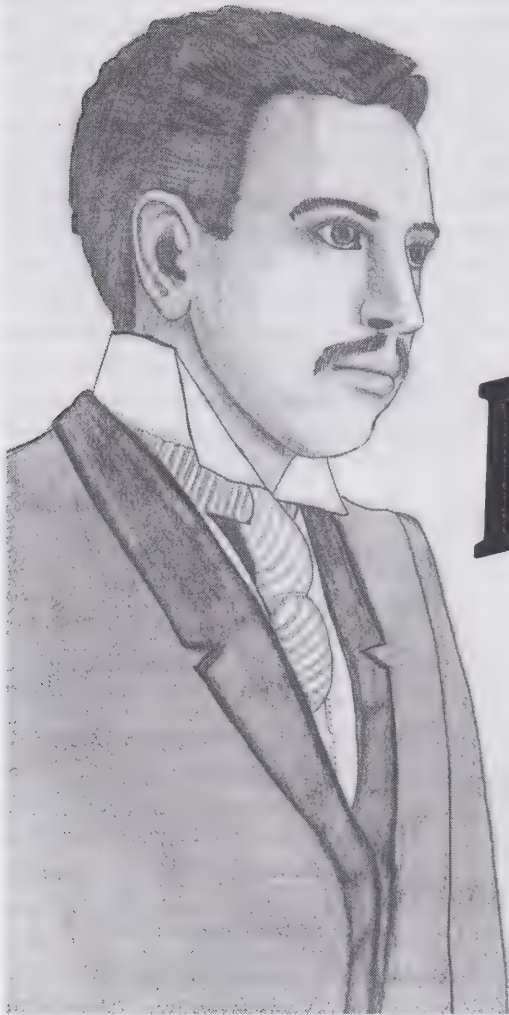
**While attempting to  
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because of the very  
nature of her  
perspective**

As I mentioned above, Ferguson does seem to be a little aware of the potential failings of this book. She attempts to address anarchists, though her idea of what our problems with her book might be are clearly very limited. She is aware that her preferred theory model has some serious failings, very briefly telling us "...located theory may paradoxically not be the best tool for examining its own locations, precisely because it is too tied to them...explicit links of thinking to context open up

some materialities while closing down others." Despite mentioning this, she never explicitly addresses how it plays out in her own work. The last part of the book is especially annoying because of this, filled as it is with opinions like the following (from the subsection of the last chapter called "Engaging the State"): "Rather than a blanket rejection of reform as an inadequate band-aid on gaping wounds, Goldman could have thought more fully about which kinds of reforms advance transformational change and which do not" (281). She continues "One way that her position could have been rethought, was in fact ripe for rethinking, was for her to ask more questions about the relationship between the reforms she disdained and the transformation she sought" (283). Clearly, and not so shockingly, written from the perspective of a liberal reformist academic.

While attempting to dispel the theorist/activist dichotomy – and I think Goldman is a very good example of why the dichotomy is indeed problematic – Ferguson ends up inadvertently reinforcing it because the very nature of her perspective; her opinions, questions, and answers are so completely controlled by her role as an academic as to be in turns both amusing and aggravating. While she is clearly addressing the book to a population where such exploratory thinking is much needed, large aspects of it fall flat when reviewed by an anarchist. **A**





John Henri

# Práxedes in Mexican

## Editors' Introduction

*This biographical essay is reprinted with permission from Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review #4 (1978). A few edits have been made for the sake of clarity and continuity, and several explanatory notes have been added in brackets. A much more extensive biography of Guerrero, To Die on Your Feet, was written by Ward Albro (Texas A&M Press) in 1996; he also wrote an excellent biography of Ricardo Flores Magón. Despite its attribution to Emiliano Zapata, Guerrero was the actual originator of the famous phrase "It's better to die on your feet than to live on your knees."*

*Si os parece que andando no Negais a la libertad, corred entonces.*

P.G. Guerrero

**P**RÁXEDIS G. GUERRERO, ANARCHIST MILITANT, PROPAGANDIST, POET, AND SECRETARY TO the Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano was the first Mexican anarchist to give his life for Land and Liberty, when he was killed, at the early age of only 28, during an attack on the town of Janos, Chihuahua, in the early months of the Mexican Revolution. Together with Ricardo Flores Magón, Práxedes was one of the main animators of the early revolutionary attempts made by the PLM to rid Mexico of its aging and dictatorial ruler, Porfirio Díaz, who for forty years had subjected the Mexican people to the most cruel despotism and slavery; during the



# Guerrero the Revolution

by Dave Poole

imprisonment of Ricardo Flores Magón, between 1907 and 1910, Práxedes took on this revolutionary task almost single-handed. Joining the PLM's Junta Organizadora in 1907 soon after its foundation, Práxedes not only became its most able and important military organizer, but also a clear-sighted propagandist who contributed much to the anarchist ideas of the PLM.

In his short but heroic life Práxedes translated the anarchism of theory into the anarchism of practical action.

Práxedes Gilberto Guerrero was born on August 28, 1882 in Los Altos de Ibarra, Guanajuato state, the sixth son of a very rich landowning family. After attending both primary and secondary school in León, he went to San Luis Potosí in early 1900. Here he worked as a laborer in the Cervecería de San Luis and later in the Fundación de Morales before returning to Los Altos de Ibarra some months later. For the next year or so he assisted his father in the family business, making several trips as its representative to Puebla, Mexico City, and Laredo.

In May 1901 Práxedes was accepted as a correspondent on Filomeno Mata's anti-Díaz journal *Diario del Hogar*, but whether this was a full- or part-time post we do not know. Later that year however he joined the Second Reserve of the army, rising in November 1901 to the rank of *subteniente* [second lieutenant] of cavalry.

By 1903 he had become interested in the anti-Díaz Liberal movement that had been founded two years before, and began to read their publications, in particular Camillo Arriaga's *El Demó-*



filo and Ricardo Flores Magón's *El Hijo del Ahuizote*. At the same time he began to read the works of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Malatesta, which were at that time difficult to obtain, although Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* had been published in pamphlet form by the opposition journal *Vespar* during the preceding year.

On April 2, 1903 a demonstration of 10,000 liberals in Monterrey, Nuevo León protesting

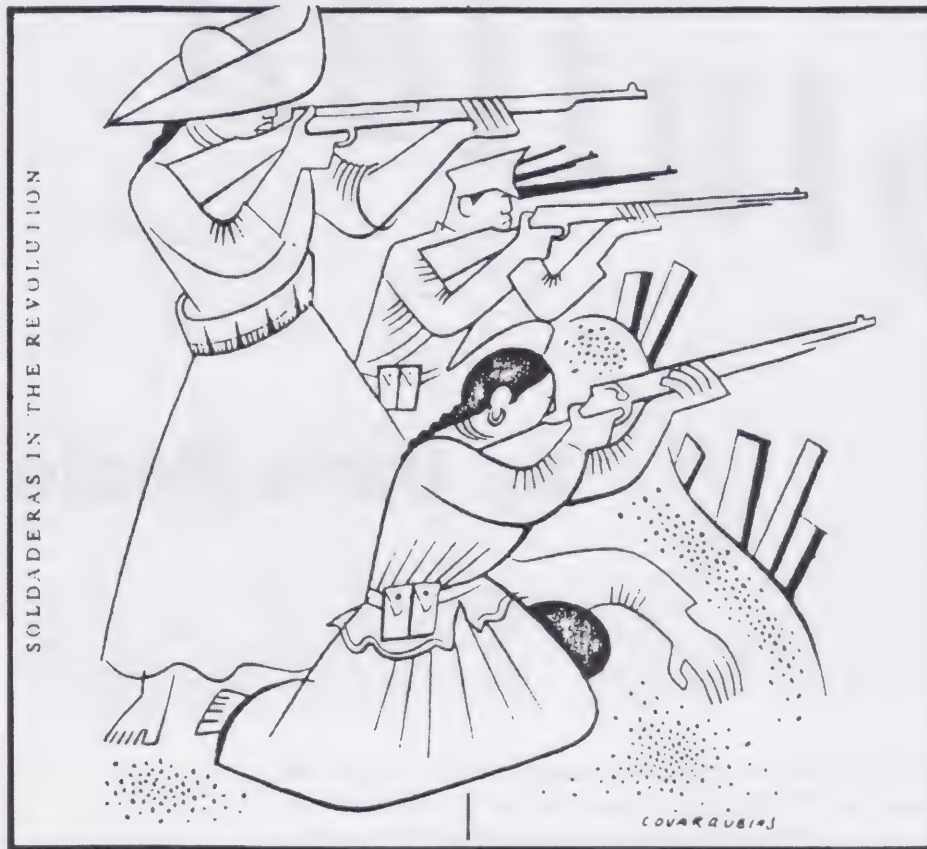
Crossing the border at El Paso, Práxedis and his two companions made their way to Denver, Colorado, where he and Manrique found work with the Colorado Supply Company, a mining firm. In early 1905 they left Denver and, after working for several weeks as wood cutters in El Dorado, California, they arrived in San Francisco in March. Here Práxedis began to publish *Alba Roja* (Red Dawn). Unfortunately

nothing is known about this journal as no copies have survived, but from the title we can assume it was of a revolutionary nature, most probably written for the benefit of Mexican workers in the US. Whether a success or failure, *Alba Roja* ceased publication when Práxedis left San Francisco in the middle of the year and headed for Pueblo, Arizona, where he worked for some time in a coal mine. Towards the end of 1905 he moved yet again, this time to Morenci, Arizona, where he found more permanent work in the foundry of the Detroit Copper Mining Company.

In 1906, the first contact was made between the *Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano* and Práxedis, when in May Manuel Sarabia, representing the Junta, visited Práxedis in Morenci. The Junta, which had been formed the preceding year in St Louis, Missouri through the initiative

of Ricardo Flores Magón, aimed at coordinating all anti-Díaz revolutionary activities both in exiled groups in the US as well as groups in Mexico itself, and probably knew the name Práxedis through *Alba Roja*.

The month following Sarabia's visit Práxedis founded the group *Obreros Libre* made up of Mexicans working in the mine at Morenci. Práxedis himself was the president and Manuel Vasquez the secretary. The group was in fact was an auxiliary junta to the Junta of the PLM. Regular collections were made and the group was able to send funds to help the main Junta in St Louis.



against the re-election of General Bernardo Reyes as state governor, were fired on by *federales* [national army] under the command of Reyes himself. Fifteen protestors were killed and many more wounded. When the news of this massacre reached Práxedis he resigned his military post in disgust and returned to his family's hacienda in Los Altos de Ibarra. He worked there as an agricultural laborer until September 1904, when he, together with Francisco Manrique and Manuel Vasquez, two fellow workers at his father's hacienda, decided to leave Mexico and find work in the United States.



In September 1906, the first PLM-inspired uprising took place in Mexico, but owing to ill-organization and the infiltration of the revolutionary movement on both sides the border by governmental informers, the uprising came to nothing. Many PLM members were arrested both in Mexico and the US, including two junta members, Juan Sarabia and Antonio I. Villarreal, Ricardo Flores Magón narrowly avoiding arrest himself in El Paso. On the run, with the price of \$50,000 on his head, Ricardo went to Los Angeles, California via Sacramento and San Francisco. Later he was joined by Librado Rivera and Villarreal, also on the run, and together they founded *Revolución* in June, 1907, which they published clandestinely.

The activities of Práxedis during this period are unclear. There is some evidence to show that he may have undertaken several missions for the Junta in Mexico after the 1906 rising but this is not certain. However in June 1901, Práxedis moved to Douglas, Arizona where he worked in the mines of the Copper Queen Company, and on the 29th was appointed the Special Delegate of the Junta. He also began at this time to write articles for *Revolución*.

Following the arrest of Ricardo Flores Magón, Villarreal, and Rivera by the authorities on August 23 after their hiding place had been discovered, Práxedis moved Los Angeles, where he assisted Manuel Sarabia and Lazano Gutierrez de Lara in the production of *Revolución*. However the journal was forced to close by the US authorities in January, 1908 after first the arrest of de Lara and of Sarabia.

On November 9, 1907 Práxedis had his first meeting with Ricardo Flores Magón, when he visited the three imprisoned Junta members in Los Angeles county jail. Following this meeting, Práxedis was appointed Second Secretary to the Junta.

Now the task of organizing and coordinating PLM activities on both sides of the border fell to Práxedis and Ricardo Flores Magón's younger brother, Enrique, who had just returned to Los Angeles from New York. After the official suppression of *Revolución*, Práxedis went to El Paso, where he made contact with various revolutionary PLM groups in that area. He also supervised the shipping of funds and

arms across the border to groups active in the northern Mexican states of Coahuila and Chihuahua.

At about this time the father of Práxedis died, leaving him a share in the family hacienda. This inheritance Práxedis rejected.

After months of patient planning and waiting, the time for a second PLM uprising was drawing near. Armed groups on both sides of the border were prepared for action when on June 18 disaster struck. The homes of PLM activists were raided in Casas Grandes, Chihuahua after information had been given to the police by an informer who had infiltrated the group. Five days later, on June 23, Texas Rangers raided the home of Prisciliano G. Silva in El Paso and seized 3000 rounds of ammunition and important documents, including a letter written by Ricardo Flores Magón and smuggled out of jail by his companion Maria Talavera. This letter listed many PLM groups within Mexico who were ready to rise up. The US authorities immediately handed this letter over to

## **Práxedis G. Guerrero, anarchist militant, propagandist, poet... was the first Mexican anarchist to give his life for Land and Liberty**

the Mexican dictatorship, and at their request Ricardo Flores Magón and his two comrades were held incommunicado in the Los Angeles county jail.

Nevertheless, despite this initial setback, the first PLM group crossed the border on the night of June 24-25 and took the town of Viesca, Coahuila with ease, the local police putting up only a token resistance during which one of the *rurales* [rural paramilitary] was killed and one *rurale* and one rebel wounded. The insurgents then opened up the jail, freeing all who were held there. Making their way to the public square, they then proclaimed the PLM manifesto and declared the Díaz dictatorship null and void. After this, horses and funds from the public office were expropriated for the revolution. All this was accomplished without harm



to any of the civil population. Unfortunately, this newly liberated population believed that the insurgents were not PLM liberators, but bandits – mainly because they had approached the town from the US border. In the face of this public opinion, the insurgents had no alternative other than to withdraw.

“The evacuation of Viesca became unavoidable,” wrote Práxedes later. “The volunteers of liberty came forth from their appointed stations and left, followed by the looks of love and of hope of the proletarian women whose sympathies had been enlivened by the actions of the true conservers of peace and order, who had voluntarily taken upon their indomitable shoulders the appellation of bandits.”<sup>3</sup>

## During the night engagement that followed their arrival, Práxedes was mortally wounded. He died at the age of 28

Once out of the town the rebels dispersed, some crossing the border into the US and others joining other active PLM groups.

The following day, to the cry of “Comrades, forward to death or the conquest of Liberty!” a PLM group of 40 men led by Práxedes, Benjamín Canales, Encarnación Guerra, and Jesús M. Rangel attacked the towns of Los Vacas (today Ciudad Acuña), Coahuila. Although the town had a garrison of over 100 *federales*, the soldiers, instead of staying in their barracks, hid in the homes of the civil population to stop them giving aid to the rebels. After a bloody struggle during which the *federales* were reduced to only 15 men, the town was finally taken. Because of the insurgent losses, though, it was decided to evacuate the town. This retreat was led by the wounded Jesús M. Rangel. The price for the capture of Las Vacas was very high. Many seasoned militants lost their lives including Canales, who was killed during the initial attack, Nestor Lopez, and Modesto G. Ramirez.<sup>4</sup>

Práxedes crossed back into the US and on July 1, together with Enrique Flores Magón,

Jose Inez Salazar, Francisco Manrique, and seven other comrades crossed back into Mexico and attacked the town of Puerto Palomas, Chihuahua after first cutting the telegraph wires leading from the town. Searching the homes of civilians first to avoid a repetition of Las Vacas, the insurgents finally found a force of 25 *rurales* locked in their barracks. An attempt to dislodge them though was repulsed. In this struggle Francisco Manrique was killed, and Práxedes and another comrade wounded.<sup>5</sup>

Revolutionary action by other PLM groups took place in other parts of the country. An attack was made on the towns of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, but this came to nothing as did an uprising by the PLM group of Janos, Chihuahua. In Baja California, the town of Mexicali was attacked by a small PLM force who then headed inland, while an uprising of Yaqui Indians in Sonora was led by Fernando Polamarez. Risings that were intended to take place in other towns and areas never materialized because of the mass arrest of militants by the dictatorship after the US authorities had given them documents found in the raid on Silva's home the day before the revolution. This then was the PLM revolution of 1908. Although by no means a military success, it was of the utmost importance in paving the way for the great revolution to come.

Following the ill-fated attack on Puerto Palomas, Práxedes and Enrique Flores Magón made their way by foot to El Paso via Ciudad Guzman and Ciudad Juárez. From El Paso they went to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where Práxedes stayed to give his wounds time to heal. While he was convalescing he wrote articles for the liberal journal *Reform, Libertad y Justicia* of Austin, Texas edited by Antonio de P. Arango and Tomas Sarabia, until Arango was arrested by the US authorities and the paper suppressed.

His wounds healed, Práxedes left Albuquerque and went to Douglas, Arizona while Enrique Flores Magón headed for San Francisco. In Douglas he made contact with Jesús M. Rangel, and began planning a third and hopefully successful uprising. After Las Vacas, Rangel had led a rearguard action when in August he had a small PLM guerrilla group ambushed a column of *federales* in the Sierra del Burro,







Coahuila, killing 20 soldiers.

In September, Práxedes went to El Paso where he was able to organize more revolutionary groups while Rangel went to Oklahoma to obtain funds for the PLM cause from Mexican mine workers.

At the beginning of 1909, Práxedes, as the Junta's special delegate, toured the central and southern states of Mexico, making contact with as many active groups as he could. At the same time Hilario C. Salis and Cándido Donato Padua were organizing PLM actions in the states of Oaxaca, Puebla, and Tlaxcala. Both were veterans of the 1906 uprising and Padua, who was the PLM military commander of the Vera Cruz area, had managed to keep a group active since that time. Práxedes was able to keep in contact with these two comrades by letter, using the code name *Nihil*.

**“We deplore violence, it is repugnant to us, but confronted with an enslavement that will continue indefinitely, or the use of force, we choose the temporary horror of armed struggle without hate for the irresponsible tyrant...”**

Returning to the US at the beginning of March, he travelled through Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois enlisting support for the PLM from members of the Socialist Party.

In August he was again in El Paso where joined Rangel and Andrea Villarreal, the sister of Antonio, who were both engaged in organizational and propaganda work there. The day following Práxedes' arrival though, Rangel was arrested by the US authorities for violation of the Neutrality Act and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment. After this setback, Práxedes went to the south of Texas where he found work for a time in a sawmill, after the US law machine had started to harass him.

Práxedes' arrival in El Paso also saw the publication of the first issue of *Punto Roja*, a revolutionary journal he had been planning since

his convalescence after Puerto Palomas. As most of the other Liberal journals in the US had been suppressed by the authorities, *Punto Roja* was of immense importance as it was one of the few ways that PLM members would keep in contact with the movement. For its short life *Punto Roja* sold 10,000 copies per issue. How many issues it ran to though is not known, and unfortunately as with *Alba Roja*, no copies have survived, although some of the articles that Práxedes wrote for it were reproduced in a small volume of collected works published by the Grupo Cultural Ricardo Flores Magón of Mexico City in 1924.<sup>6</sup> Soon after the appearance of *Punto Roja*, Práxedes was forced to leave El Paso, the journal being then run by an American socialist William Lowe and two Mexicans, Clemente Garcia and Antonio Villarreal.

At the beginning of 1910 Práxedes was working in Houston, Texas until he was forced to move to Bridgeport, where he worked in coal mines there. He was also able to contribute articles to *Evolución Social*, a liberal weekly of Tohaya. At the end of May *Punto Roja* was forcibly closed down by the police and a month later Práxedes was forced to move after the Díaz dictatorship had offered the price of \$10,000 for his capture.

On August 3, Ricardo Flores Magón, Antonio I. Villarreal, and Librado Rivera were freed from jail in Florence, Arizona, where they had been serving an 18-month sentence for the alleged violation of the Neutrality Act. They immediately went to Los Angeles where he met at the railway station by hundreds of PLM sympathizers. At the end of August, Práxedes left San Antonio, where he been working in the railway workshops, and joined Ricardo Flores Magón in Los Angeles. In September the publication of *Regeneración* was resumed with Práxedes as a member of the editorial board.

All Junta members now united (except Juan Sarabia, who was in prison in Mexico), plans for a third uprising were put in hand. Already as early as April, PLM military leaders meeting in Tlaxcala had decided that because of the general unrest throughout the country, the time for revolutionary action was opportune. This opinion was strengthened when 1500



armed peons took the town of Valladolid, Yucatan holding it for four days, and the following month 300 peons in Bernardino Contla, Tlaxcala, took the town hall in the of the PLM and were dispersed only when a detachment of *federales* were called in.

As they prepared for their social revolution the Junta was somewhat surprised to find Francisco I. Madero, an unsuccessful candidate in the presidential elections held the previous June (Madero had stood for the Anti-Re-electionist Party and after his defeat had accused Díaz of rigging the election) was planning an uprising to begin on November 20. Their plans not being fully finalized, the Junta contacted as many PLM groups in Mexico as they could and told them to time their uprising with that of Madero. They were careful to also send out a general circular which explained quite clearly the way

These instructions were signed by all the Junta members.

The Maderists rose on their appointed day but were all but defeated. The PLM now took the offensive.

At the end of November Práxedes left Los Angeles for El Paso, where he gathered together a group of 22 men, and on the night of December 19, crossed the border into Chihuahua. His plan was to take several small towns in the north of the state and then the state capital. On December 22 the insurgents expropriated a train bound for El Paso. 20 kilometres south of Ciudad Juárez they took the engine and one car and went as far as Estación Guzmán, blowing up bridges and cutting telegraph wires behind them. At El Sabenal they were joined the following day by an additional 25 rebels. That day Práxedes was able to report back to Junta in Los



in which the groups were to act towards the followers of Madero.

...The Junta advises you to rise up in arms using Madero's movement, but not to join it... attract all those of good faith who are willing to fight; trying all the time to counteract all Maderist tendencies, so that revolution may be made for the benefit of the Mexican people, instead of being a criminal way for the ambitious to gain power...<sup>7</sup>

Angeles: "Until today there has been nothing new. But today the Northwestern Railroad is without bridges. The people are joining us voluntarily, Guerrero."<sup>8</sup>

In Guzmán, the rebels divided themselves into two columns. While one, led by Prisciliano G. Silva marched towards Laguna de Santa Maria, the other, consisting of 32 men led by Práxedes, marched towards Casas Grandes. Their intention to take this town, though, was



abandoned when they discovered that the town had a garrison of 450 *federales*. Bypassing Casas Grandes they attacked the town of Janos on December 29. After a long and bloody fight the town was taken by the PLM insurgents, but before the detachment of *federales* stationed there were overcome, they managed to alert the Casas Grandes garrison. Immediately a force of 150 *federales*, together with a detachment of *rurales*, were sent to Janos. During the night engagement that followed their arrival, Práxedes was mortally wounded.<sup>9</sup> He died at the age of 28.

## The insurgents then opened up the jail, freeing all who were held there

In November 1932 his remains were exhumed and taken to the state capital, Chihuahua, where they were reinterred with great pomp. This was done not to honor an anarchist but to honor a mere National Hero by a so-called revolutionary regime that then, as today, subjects anarchists to the most brutal torture and murder.

**A**S CAN BE SEEN FROM THIS BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL sketch, Práxedes G. Guerrero was above all an anarchist activist. As he wrote to Manuel Sarabia in May 1910: "I am going towards a practical anarchism to avoid the error committed by many 'dogmatists' who have placed themselves outside the masses and have in effect, turned a sharp blade into an instrument of blunt wood...."<sup>10</sup>

Despite this emphasis on the practical and active rather than the theoretical, Práxedes did make a very important and lasting contribution to revolutionary journalism as his few, surviving writings show. These articles, mainly written for *Punto Rojo* and *Regeneración* for 1909 and 1910 respectively, sprinkled as they are with poetic imagery, show a very clear insight into the ills of an authoritarian society, and offer a libertarian alternative that could be adopted to overcome these ills. Several themes preoccupy these articles, the most prominent being racialism, women's emancipation, ratio-

nal education, and most importantly, the necessity for revolution.

As a Mexican worker in the United States, Práxedes saw at first hand the prejudice practiced by the American bosses and general public against all migrant workers in general and Mexican workers in particular. Of all ethnic working groups in the US, the Mexicans were the most poorly paid. In many towns they were forbidden altogether from public places, and after the revolution of 1908 mine owners in Texas and Oklahoma reduced the wages of Mexicans to prevent them from giving financial aid to the PLM.

"...Racial prejudice and nationality," he wrote "clearly managed by the capitalists and tyrants prevent peoples living side by side in a fraternal manner..."

...A river, a mountain chain, a line of small monuments suffice to maintain foreigners and make enemies of two peoples, both living in mistrust and envy of one another because of the acts of past generations. Each nationality pretends to be above the other in some kind of way, the dominating classes, the keepers of education and the wealth of nations, feed the proletariat with the belief of stupid superiority and pride in order to make impossible the union of workers of all nations who are separately fighting to free themselves from Capital..."

...If all the workers of the different American nations had direct participation in all questions of social importance which effect one or more proletarian groups these questions would be resolved promptly and happily by the workers themselves..."<sup>11</sup>

Racialism was not only practiced against groups of workers but also against individual workers. One such case was the lynching of a Mexican worker in Texas for the supposed murder of an American woman. Práxedes wrote in disgust of this incident:

*Where?*

In the model nation, in the land of the free and the home of the brave, in the land still overshadowed by the hanging of John Brown in the USA in a Texas village called Rock Springs.

*When?*

Today, in the 10th year of the century, in the



epoch of aircraft, of the wireless, of the telegraph, of Peace Congresses and of Humanitarian Societies.

*Who?*

A crowd of white "men" to use the name they like: white men white white.

These men who burnt alive a man were not cannibals, they were not natives from Equatorial Africa, they were not wild men from Mayaya, they were not Spanish inquisitors, nor were they troglodytes, nor were they illiterate

yond wild beasts.<sup>12</sup>

Together with the elimination of racial prejudice, the emancipation of women was for Práxedes as indispensable as revolution itself. Speaking at a public meeting devoted to this subject in Los Angeles only a few weeks before his death, he pointed out quite clearly that the main obstacle to the true liberation of women was the bible, that taught



naked men from the jungles; instead they were the descendants of Washington, of Franklin, of Lincoln, it was a well-dressed crowd, educated and proud of its virtues, they were citizens of the United States white men.

Progress, civilization, culture, humanitarianism. All lies over the calcified bones of Antonio Rodriguez. All fantasies asphyxiated in the pestilential smoke of the Rock Springs bonfire. There are schools in each town and on each ranch in Texas; through these school passed the boys who become the men of the lynching crowd. It was in these schools that their intellect was formed, it was these schools that produced those who set fire to a living man and said, some days later, that justice had been done.

In these schools men are educated to go be-

the impurity of women, and custom that has translated this into the inferiority of women:

The child and the woman have always been the elected victims of barbarism, and only in some countries have women enjoyed a few privileges that have placed her above man socially, such as the primitive clans where matriarchy existed. But today women do not yet occupy the true place in society that they should, as women, have...

...Religion, whatever its name, however it presents itself, is the most terrible enemy of women. Under the pretext of consolation it annihilates her consciousness; in the name of a sterile love, it takes her away from love, fountain of human life and happiness; with rough phantoms



sketched in unhealthy poetry she is separated from the real, strong and immense poetry of a free existence.

Religion is the auxiliary of domestic and national despots; its mission is one of taming; caresses or the whip, the cage or chains, all these are employed to obtain the same results. Women are enslaved as a first step, because the woman is the mother of the child and the child becomes a man...

...Feminism serves as a base for opposing the enemies of women's emancipation. But there is certainly no attraction in say a woman policeman, in a woman removed from her soft sex to grasp the whip of the oppressor...

...Liberation, equality, does not try to make man as woman; it gives the same opportunity to both the faces of the human species so that they both develop without obstacle, helping one another without demanding rights for one only, without impeding each other's place in nature. Men and women have to fight for this rational equality, to harmonize the individual happiness with the collective happiness. Without this there will be, perpetually in the home, the seeds of tyranny, the buds of slavery and social misery. If custom is a yoke then we must break the custom however sacred it appears. In breaking such customs, civilization advances. Some though will say it is a bridle, but such bridles have never liberated the people, never satisfied hunger nor redeemed slaves.<sup>13</sup>

By far the most important contribution Práxedis made to revolutionary propaganda was on the nature of, and the resistance to, tyranny. A resistance that could only be revolution:

"...Tyranny is a logical result of an illness in society and its only remedy is revolution..."<sup>14</sup>

After objectively analyzing the nature of tyranny Práxedis concluded that

tyrants and common criminals are equally subject to the natural laws of determinism, and even though their acts appall and anger us, we must agree with justice on the irresponsibility of one or the other; but without arriving at absolute judgments it can be said that tyranny is the most excusable of crimes because it cannot be committed by one individual acting alone. It only occurs when, at the same time, there are circumstances of great complexity outside the individual's will where there are powerful men

waiting who are more apt and better gifted in qualities for evil. In effect, would a tyrant exercise power over a people who did not give him supporting elements? A common malefactor can commit his evil acts without the complicity of his victim; a despot though cannot exist or tyrannies without the co-operation of his followers and the most numerous part of them; tyranny is a crime of unconscious collectivities against themselves and it must be attacked as a social illness by means of revolution, considering the death of tyrants as only an incident in the struggle, nothing more than an incident, not an art of justice.<sup>15</sup>

Práxedis also saw clearly that tyrannies were made, in part at least, through national gratitude. Many "heroes" and "national saviors" have been hoisted into power by a grateful people, blinded to the true nature of both the individual and his followers. Of course when they realize what they have done it is too late. Práxedis gives the example of Agustín de Hurtado but history is full of examples, Mexico's own Madero or Castro to name only a few:

Gratitude is the flower of servility; the libertarian despises it because it has the odor of a slaves prison.

The people do not owe gratitude to their liberators just as they do not owe love to their tyrants.<sup>16</sup>

Tyranny as Práxedis saw it could only be overthrown by revolution, a revolution that would, by necessity, be violent. There was no other way; reformism, pacifism or acceptance of tyranny as a necessary evil all being equally repugnant. He accepted revolutionary violence for what it was and nothing more, and died putting it into practice.


...We are not looking for a subterfuge to gloss over the violence which unavoidably and by necessity will have to accompany the liberating movement. We deplore violence, it is repugnant to us, but confronted with an enslavement that will continue indefinitely, or the use of force, we choose the temporary horror of armed struggle without hate for the irresponsible tyrant...

We undertake violent struggle without making



it our ideal, without thinking of the execution of a tyrant as a supreme victory of justice.

Our violence is not justice, it is simply a necessity that fills itself at the expense of feeling and idealism, and on its own it is insufficient to assure for the people the conquest of progress. Our violence would have no purpose without the violence of despotism nor would it have any reason if the majority of the tyrant's victims were not consciously or unconscious accomplices of today's unjust situation. When human aspirations are free to develop in the social milieu, then the production and practice of violence would be wrong; but now it is a practical means of breaking old molds that the evolution of pacifism would take hundreds of years to corrode.

The aim of revolution, as we have said many times before, is to guarantee for all the right to live by destroying the causes of misery, ignorance and despotism, scorning the humanitarian theorists' cry of sentimentality.<sup>17</sup> 

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### Endnotes

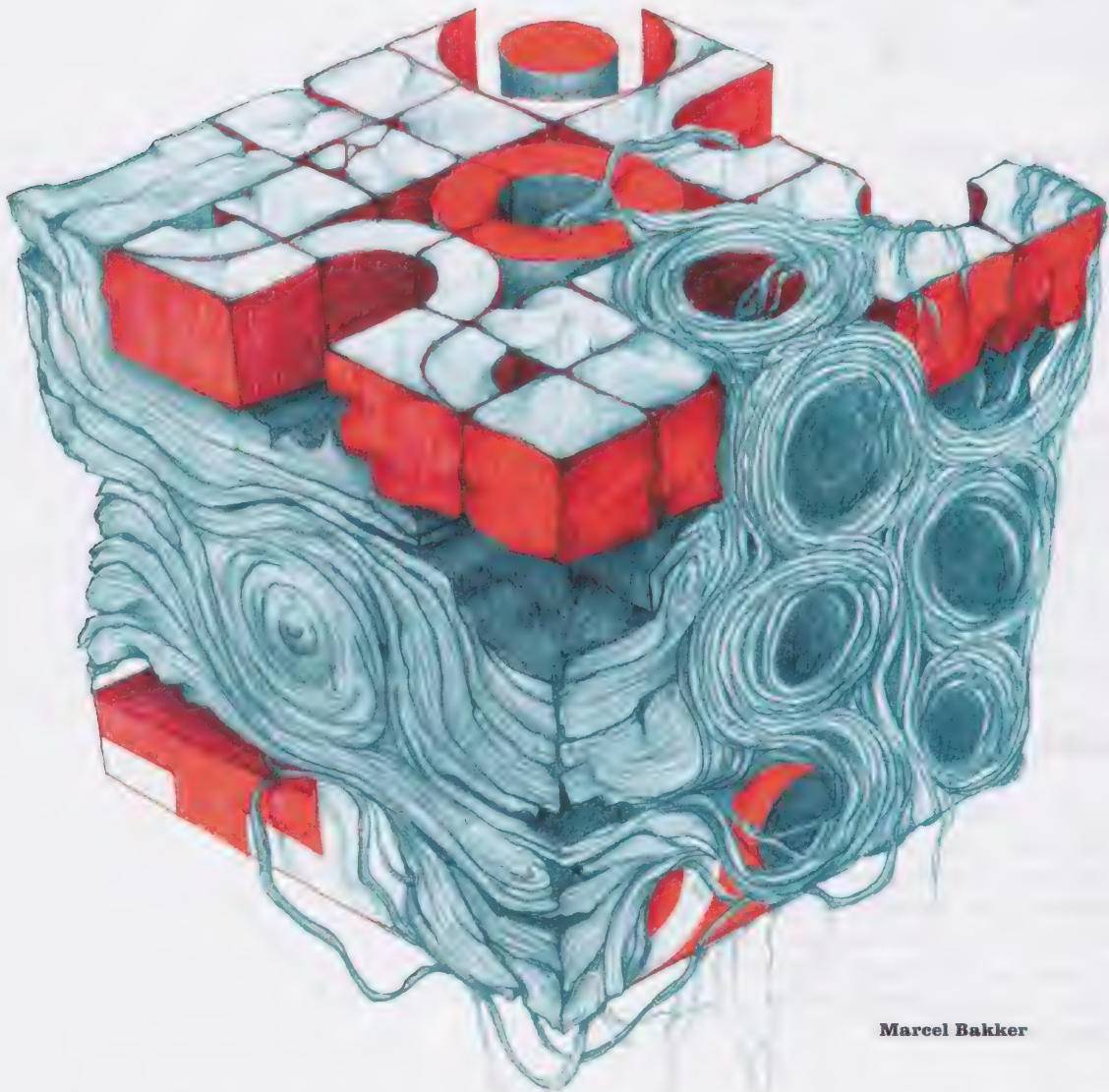
- 1 For further material on Ricardo Flores Magón and the Partido Liberal Mexicano see my article "Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution" in the *Cienfuegos Press Anarchist review* No. 3 and my introduction and chronology in *Land and Liberty! Anarchist Influences in the Mexican Revolution: Ricardo Flores Magón* (Cienfuegos Press 1977).

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- 12 *Blancos, blancos*, ibid p.144-145.
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# ITS CORE IS THE NEGATION

by **Alejandro de Acosta**



Marcel Bakker



I HAVE ALWAYS CONSIDERED MY INCLINATION TO ANARCHY TO BE IRREDUCIBLE TO a politics. Anarchist commitments run deeper. They are more intimate, concerning supposedly personal or private matters; but they also overflow the instrumental realm of getting things done. Over time, i have shifted from thinking that anarchist commitments are more than a politics to thinking that they are something other than a politics. I continue to return to this latter formulation. It requires thinking things through, not just picking a team; it is more difficult to articulate and it is more troubling to our inherited common sense.<sup>1</sup> I do not think I am alone in this. It has occurred to some of us to register this feeling of otherness by calling our anarchist commitments an ethics. It has also occurred to some of us to call these commitments anti-political. I think these formulations are, for many of us, implicitly interlinked, though hardly interchangeable. What concerns me here in the main is the challenge of what it could mean to live out our commitments as an ethics – though i think the relevance of this thinking to anti-politics will be clarified as well.

I intentionally write ethics, and not morality: as I see it, ethics concerns the flourishing of life, the refinement of desirable ways of life, happy lives. Tiqqun put it well:

When we use the term “ethical” we’re never referring to a set of precepts capable of formulation, of rules to observe, of codes to establish. Coming from us, the word “ethical” designates everything having to do with forms-of-life... No formal ethics is possible. There is only the interplay of forms-of-life among themselves, and the protocols of experimentation that guide them locally.<sup>2</sup>

Many of us have been able to reject morality as a form of social control, as the stultifying pressure of the mass on us, as imposed or self-imposed limitation on what we do and what we are capable of doing. Much the same could be said for any ethical universalism which, though emphasizing ways of life and not moral codes or injunctions, tends to homogenize ways of life in the name of a shared good; it does so by surreptitiously presupposing that good and treating it as a natural fact or self-evident transcultural reality. In short, it rejects transcendent morality only to re-introduce it immanently. Our rejection of this single good went often enough in the direction of pluralism: the story went that there were many goods, many valid or desirable forms of life. This seemed obvious enough, even intuitive, to many of us. The story went well with anarchist principles of decentralization and voluntary association, and resonated with many in the years when anti-globalization rhetoric emphasized multiculturalism as a practice of resistance and the local as the site of its practice. It also made sense, or at least was useful, insofar as it was an efficient way to communicate an anarchist perspective to non-anarchists, especially to potential anarchists.

So here we have two different approaches to ethics. One tries to secure access and orientation to a single flourishing form, the criterion being that it be understandable by all: the good unifies. The other approach claims that there are many such forms, and this plurality itself is the criterion: the good distributes itself into goods. Always suspicious of universalizing claims, for many years I sided (more or less comfortably) with the latter, participating in a game of adding -s to the end of words like people, culture, gender, and so on. Though I was never too concerned to recruit, so that the benefits of communicability were irrelevant to me, this game nevertheless seemed linked to an affirmative gesture, affirmative specifically of difference and plurality in the political sphere. There was always the question of recuperation, i.e. that governmental and other institutions so easily incorporated such pluralism into their functioning as its liberal pole (the conservative pole, which was always present implicitly at least, had to do with norms of governance or rule-following generally). For example, these days university administrations trumpet Multiculturalism louder than anyone else, and Locally Sourced is a hot marketing term. This troubled those of us who took this side, but we countered by emphasizing what could be called raw plurality as opposed to the masticated, digested, and regurgitated version we got from



administrators and mouthpieces of all sorts. Choosing pluralism, eagerly or grudgingly, we might have ended up as uneasy relativists; or we might have been working hard to expand the frontiers of liberalism and democracy, there where the word *radical* finds its most docile partners...<sup>3</sup>

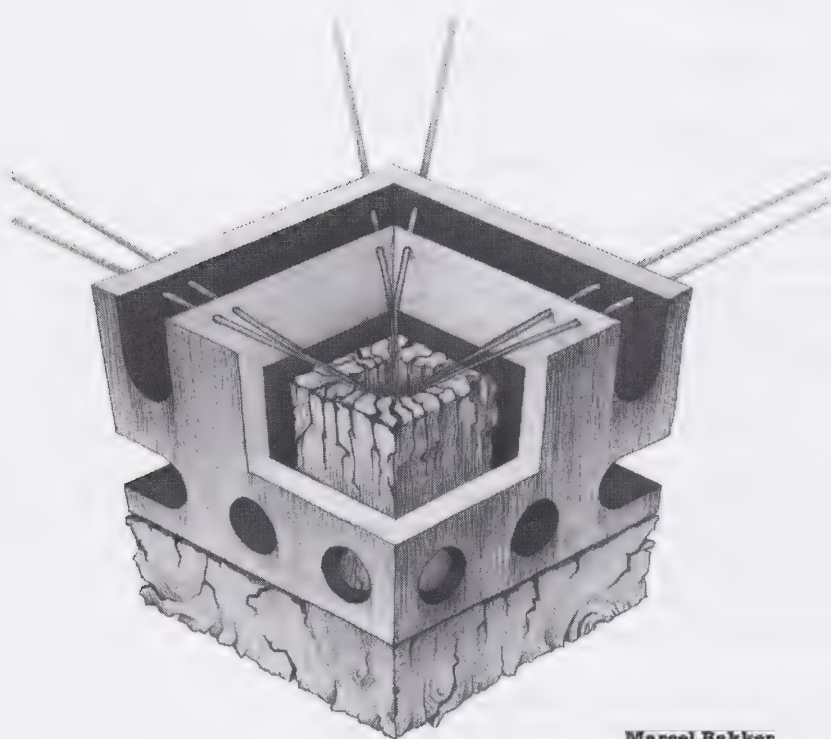
I have come to realize, after what I now recognize to be good deal of confusion, if not unconscious hedging, that even as I labored on the limits of pluralism, my thinking was incongruous with that position. My writing and conversations repeatedly gestured in the

are empty, groundless, ultimately meaningless. And this is what was really at stake in distinguishing ethics and morality. My idea of a happy life is not something I reason my way to, or choose, but rather something that manifests senselessly... but I can use my reasoning (my judgment, even!) to help in pushing back, reducing, destroying everything that blocks my way of life.

This report on what must be not only my own trajectory, but also part of the history of the last twenty-five years (more or less for some others) is due in part to some crucial pages in Duane Rousselle's *After Post-Anarchism* that consolidated *this* thought of nihilism for me. Rousselle argues that the nihilist position I have just described has always been the ethical core of anarchism, and that we are now in a moment where this may finally be recognized.

I want to respond to *After Post-Anarchism* because it contains that significant provocation. Unfortunately, for most of its readers, this book cannot but be an exotic object. To whatever degree it discusses familiar ideas or even lived situations, it does so through arcane routes. Yes, it is difficult reading; but it is not by engaging with what is most difficult in it that readers will happen upon the few remarkable insights that it contains. Rousselle's writing is difficult because of the density of his references and because of an unfortunate penchant for wordiness and digression. Although I would be the last to say that every idea articulated in theoretical or abstract terms can also be phrased in ordinary, so-called accessible language, I suspect that much of what I find valuable in *After Post-Anarchism* can indeed be restated otherwise. I intend to do so here. As I noted, this aspect of *After Post-Anarchism* struck me as an unusually clear formulation of thoughts I had been struggling to express for years (among other places, in the pages of this magazine). So, instead of a broader critique of post-anarchism (which Rousselle has a knack for folding back into a plea for its relevance) I will limit myself to some brief remarks about his misprision of the respective roles of theory and practice.<sup>4</sup>

Post-anarchism receives numerous formulations in this book, but really only two



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direction of another position, irreducible to universalism and ever more desperate attempts at pluralism. It is a *nihilism* that denies the validity of the singular Good at the heart of universalism, as well as the distinct senses of the Good at the heart of pluralism. For nihilists, the only ethical gesture is negative: a rejection of the claims to authority of universalism and pluralism. For us, all such claims



definitions. The first is simply that it is a “discursive strategy” (31): not so much a theory as the outcome of ongoing discussions and debates in a theoretical space where anarchism, post-structuralism, and new social movements (as theorized by their participants and outsiders) intersect. In this respect I could make many objections or clarifications, but I will simply note that for such investigations to proceed as Rousselle intends, anarchism (as “classical anarchism,” 4 and *passim*) must be interpreted as “anarchist philosophy,” sometimes “traditional anarchist philosophy” (39 and *passim*).<sup>5</sup> The second definition, which follows from the first but is more provocative, is that post-anarchism “is simply anarchism folded back onto itself” (136). For Rousselle this means an anarchic questioning of the ethical basis of anarchism, a search for the anarchy in anarchism; he later specifies his own version of this folding in terms of the distinction between manifest and latent contents of statements.

Here I can underline both the weakness and the promise of Rousselle’s approach. Whatever the silliness of the term post-anarchism, I think the second definition’s project of questioning, of folding back reflexively, is of interest to any anarchist who does not take their position on questions of morality and ethics (or anything else, for that matter) for granted. When he is pursuing this sort of questioning, Rousselle is at his strongest. When he is treating the anarchist tradition interchangeably as a series of historical figures, events, practices, etc. and as the discursive or conceptual framing that can be abstracted from them (“anarchist philosophy”), he is at his weakest. He repeatedly falls into the intellectualist trap of describing actions as the result of pre-existing theoretical attitudes. “Can we at least provisionally admit,” he asks rhetorically, “that anarchism is not a tradition of canonical thinkers but one of canonical practices based on a canonical selection of ethical premises?” (129). Freeing himself from the idea of an anarchist movement set into motion by a bearded man’s intellect, he remains on the side of the intellect by presupposing of a pre-existing set of premises on which practices

are “based” and from which they derive their status as “canonical.”

One more critical remark about the weakness in this approach. Rousselle describes post-anarchism in a third way, and this one is not so much a definition as an illustration. He writes that post-anarchism is the “new paradigm” (126) of anarchist thought: “The

**Over time, I have shifted from thinking that anarchist commitments are more than a politics to thinking that they are something other than a politics**

paradigm shift... that made its way into the anarchist discourse, as ‘post-anarchism,’ allowed for the realization and elucidation of the ethical component of traditional anarchist philosophy” (129). He is so zealous in his promotion of this term that several times in his book he annexes authors who explicitly reject the term, such as Uri Gordon and Gabriel Kuhn, to the cause. This all seems to me to be in bad taste. There is also a more profound problem at stake: paradigm shifts do not happen because one says they do. The declarative, performative wishes evidenced whenever Rousselle uses the language of advancement or progress, as though what was at stake here was a science, tell us much about his intentions, but always fall flat in terms of convincingness. Even if there is a paradigm shift at work in anarchist theory (or practice!), there is no reason to consider the shift as an improvement. We are probably just catching up to an increasingly complex, chaotic, and uncontrollable world. So I fault him for misunderstanding what a paradigm shift is, for wildly exaggerating the overall importance of post-anarchism, and for framing anarchism too abstractly as an inchoate philosophy. Nevertheless, returning to my principal reasons for writing this essay, I will now praise Rousselle, for some of what he writes about



ethics.

Early in *After Post-Anarchism* Rousselle states that, answering what he calls “the question of place” (roughly, on what grounds do you make an ethical claim?) there are three types of responses. There are universalist theories, which state that “there is a shared objective essence that grounds all normative principles irrespective of the stated values of independently situated subjects or social groups” (41). This would include most religiously grounded moralities, as well as appeals to human nature. Most such theories are absolutist, but they need not all be so; utilitarianism is an example of a “normative theory that proposes that the correct solution is the one that provides the greatest good to

## Or we might have been working hard to expand the frontiers of liberalism and democracy, where the word radical finds its most docile partners...

the majority of the population.” The second set of theories, which corresponds to what I called pluralism in the opening section, is what Rousselle refers to as ethical relativism. “Relativists believe that social groups do indeed differ in their respective ethical value systems and that each respective system constitutes a place of ethical discourse” (43). That is, there are different systems (of belief, culture, custom, etc.) that may ground morals. Again, there is an interesting subset, a limit-case: “At the limit of relativist ethics is the belief that the unique subject is the place from which ethical principles are thought to arise” (43). This corresponds to most types of individualism.

The provocation I am underlining in Rousselle’s book is that, rather than try once more to save pluralism by pushing it farther into a parodic relativism, he pursues what he calls ethical nihilism. His first stab at a definition runs: “*ethical nihilism* is the belief that

ethical truths, if they can be said to exist at all, derive from the paradoxical non-place within the heart of any place” (43). That is, nihilism denies the ground, or at least the grounding or claim to grounding, in ethical universalism and pluralism. “Nihilists seek to discredit and/or interrupt all universalist and relativist responses to the question of place [...] nihilists are critics of all that currently exists and they raise this critique against all such one-sided foundations and systems” (44-45). Obviously, this completes the triplicity with which I began this essay.

It is from this triplicity that Rousselle develops his analysis of ethics in relation to anarchism. Rather than argue about existing moral codes or ethical paths, Rousselle suggests that another position has so far remained largely undiscussed: the nihilist one that rejects the authority or normativity of such argumentation. He states that post-anarchists, so far, have approached “classical anarchism” as a universalism (generally based on human nature) and sought to redistribute its ethical impetus in the direction of relativism. What Rousselle seeks to do, by contrast, is to make explicit the implicit core of classical anarchism; and that core, according to him, is ultimately nihilist. “One must therefore seek to remain consistent with the latent force rather than the manifest structure of anarchist ethics, for there is a negativity that is at the very core of the anarchist tradition” (98-99). Centering his discussion on Kropotkin, Rousselle claims that while Kropotkin’s manifest ethics was clearly universalist (grounded on an appeal to human nature), his latent ethics was nihilist. “If it can be demonstrated that Kropotkin’s system of ‘mutual aid’ also called for the restriction of the free movement of the individual then it can also be argued that his work, like much of traditional anarchist philosophy, was always at war with itself” (146).<sup>6</sup> The ethical nihilism is revealed by chipping away at the manifest content of the old saws, serially revealing the conflicts they conceal, the latent content that was always implied in them:

Anarchists are against the State and Church  
*implies...*



Anarchists are against the structures of representation and power at work in the State and Church

*implies...*

Anarchists are against any other structures of representation and power analogous to those at work in the State and Church

*implies...*

Anarchists are against any structure of representation and power.

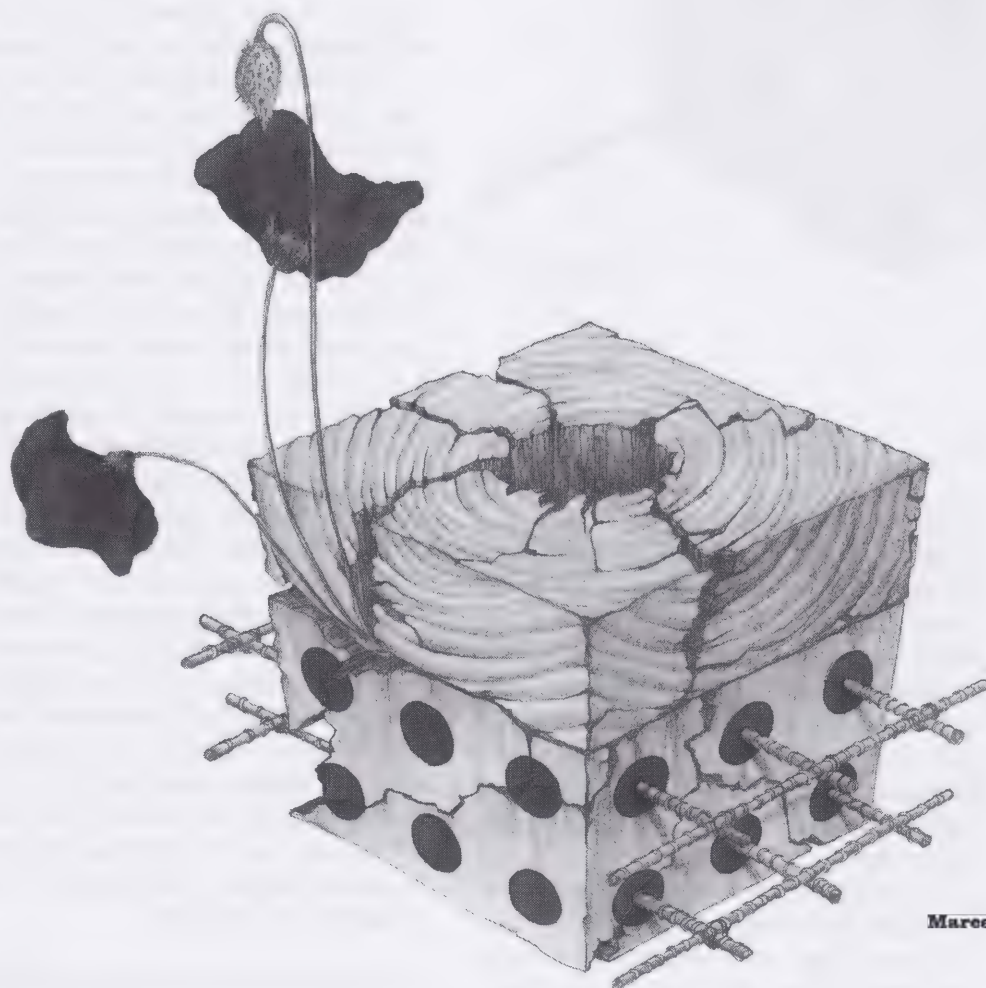
*implies...*

Anarchists are against all authority, all representation

*implies...*

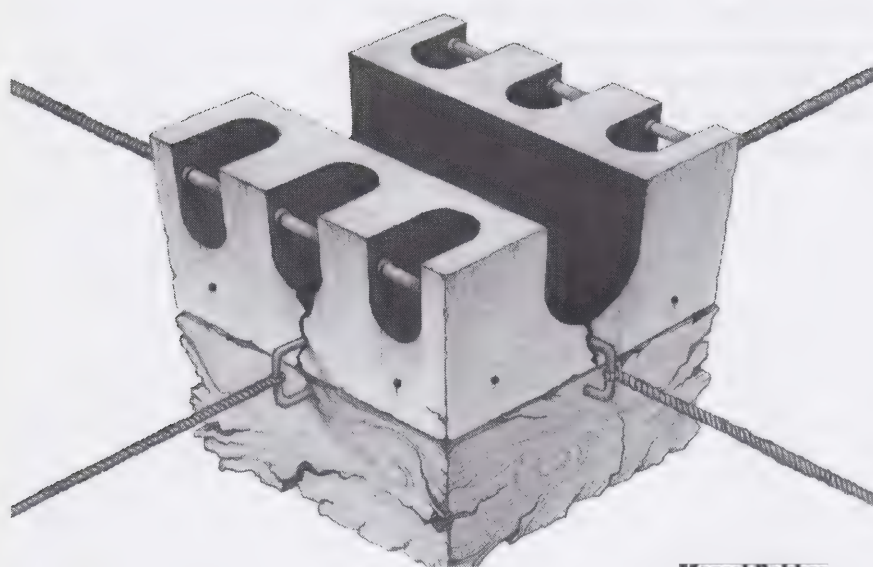
Anarchists are against...<sup>7</sup>

Now, most anarchists will drop off at some point in the chain of implication, judging it to have gone too far past what they regard as common sense. (Our enemies might be less inclined to think they have gone too far.) What does this mean? Roughly speaking, that under analysis the initial emphases on opposition to state or religious authority give way to an unbounded hostility to all authority; that the opposition to political representation opens onto being against all representation; and that the critique of the unfoundedness of existing moral codes concludes in a sense of the ungroundedness of all morality. And they



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do so in two senses: historically, as the overall tendency of anarchism has sufficient time to develop (that it will be repressed and denied by its adherents as well as enemies is not evidence against this); and psychologically or subjectively, since this overall tendency is also an intimate matter in the life of individuals, part of the unconscious of its first and present proponents (and so analogous claims about repression by adherents and enemies most certainly apply).<sup>8</sup>

Rousselle suggests that, although most post-anarchists thought they were improving upon anarchism or developing its intuitions, they were in fact rendering it more docile, because more akin to liberal ideals; he, on the other hand, has revealed its nihilist core, its

true and original inclination to anarchy. The problem now becomes: when anarchists disavow this nihilist core, opting for some version of relativism (or universalism!), how do we answer them? For the same reasons that I do not take Kropotkin's or Bakunin's manifest ideas as my guides, I do not take what analysis might reveal as their latent content as my guide. And if I do not find this kind of argumentation compelling, why would I use it on another? This is where Rousselle's intellectualist assumptions undercut the force of his claims. I do think, however, that the ethical nihilist position is at the core of most anarchist discourse and practice, as its latent content. That is, I think he is basically right, *not specifically about so-called classical anarchism, but, proximately and for the most part, about anarchists*. Rousselle's psychoanalytically inspired method of reading texts should be transformed into a rhetoric, or rather a counter-rhetoric, that can intervene in the present more directly. What he does with old texts, others might be able to do with people, groups, and contemporary texts. But how and when to use this counter-rhetoric? The least I can say is that I am not in the business of convincing anyone about what they really think. I may well keep my analysis to myself, or state it in resignation of being misunderstood; or I may use it to attack. Whatever the case, the nihilist position will be known in that it exposes the differend between itself and the others, and *between the others and themselves*.

This is consistent with the basic formulation of nihilism as a negative ethics. Actions taken in its name are always provisional: to reiterate from *Theory of Bloom*, all we have and all we know is "the interplay of forms-of-life" and "the protocols of experimentation that guide them." No one knows what the world would be like if it were populated with nihilists alone! Following the previously cited sentence on the negativity at the core of the tradition, Rousselle cites one of his sources, the moral philosopher J.L. Mackie:

[W]hat I have called moral scepticism is a negative doctrine, not a positive one: it says what there isn't, not what there is. It says that there do



not exist entities or relations of a certain kind, objective values or requirements, which many people have believed to exist. If [this] position is to be at all plausible, [it] must give some account of how other people have fallen into what [it] regards as an error, and this account will have to include some positive suggestions about how values fail to be objective, about what has been mistaken for, or has led to false beliefs about, objective values. But this will be a development of [the] theory, not its core: its core is the negation. (99)

In my language, the negation corresponds to ethics as a way of life; the account of error, to what I call a counter-rhetoric. I praise Rousseau, then, because he contributed to a defense of what is negative in anarchism, while also hinting at a defense of negativity as such. He makes space for us to read passages such as the one by Mackie, above, creatively, offering them to us as lessons – logical lessons about what anarchy means. Its core is the negation.

Such logical lessons are useful, arguably necessary, if we want to discard hope at this juncture and think with more sobriety. Most of the thinking from this perspective remains to be done. It concerns the conjunctions and disjunctions between several senses of nihilism. First, there are those most familiar in the milieu as positions: nihilist anarchy and nihilist communism. Second, there is nihilism as a theoretical concern in other writers, from Jacobi to Baudrillard. Lastly, there is the diagnostic sense of nihilism inherited from Nietzsche. Articulating these with the ethical nihilism Rousseau discovers/invents at the core of anarchism will be a complicated task, so I will limit myself here to an enumeration of provisional consequences stemming from what I have written so far. I offer these consequences as a relay from *After Post-Anarchism's* provocations to the thinking that remains to be done: to make it possible, to prepare it as best I know how. The first two consequences suggest how we might deploy the triplicity to understand and critique contemporary anarchist approaches. The latter two concern the broader relevance and context for

ethical nihilism, setting out from the anarchist context.

The first consequence is that it is now clear that *many contemporary anarchists confusedly combine ethical universalism with ethical pluralism; and ethical universalism with ethical nihilism*. In a society like ours, one whose ideal is supposedly liberal democracy, we should expect pluralist language to be the most likely one in which radicals will offer their analysis and proposals. Community organizing, consciousness-raising, and so on have obvious links to liberalism and are at best its radical forms. As a result, moralistic types – those who publically advocate a renewal of society, an improvement of government and management (as self-government, self-management),

## **Community organizing, consciousness-raising, and so on, have obvious links to liberalism and are at best its radical forms**

suggesting pluralist approaches – are likely to refuse to discuss or make explicit the universalist core of their thought. Others might advocate the same practices, while privately sensing or even admitting the hollowness of the values they defend. (One disingenuous result of these private/public conflicts is the unrestrained impulse to act no matter what, as though action can never be damaging or compromised, coupled with claims that it is all an experiment, that we are learning as we go, and so on.) This offers a new perspective on the emergence and significance of second-wave anarchy<sup>9</sup> generally, including post-Left anarchy, green/anti-civilization anarchy, and, I suppose, post-anarchism as well, all of which might now be seen as attempts to analyze and reveal these contradictions, to make explicit the ways in which anarchist discourse was always at war with itself.

The second consequence complements the first: another set of anarchists *confuses ethical*





*pluralism with ethical nihilism. Here merely stating the ethical nihilist position coherently has effects.* In this respect I think of those who might have overcome the liberal value-set in politics, advocating destruction of the existent, but continue to drift back to pluralist/relativist perspectives in everyday life and problem-solving due to a lack of imagination. This probably results from unconsciously positing a pluralist society as what comes after a destructive moment, while not consciously framing destructive action as having any particular goal beyond destruction of the existent. I should add here that it would

be hasty to collapse the ethical nihilist position into any one practice or set of practices. Destructive practices, partial or absolute, do not follow mechanically from negation. Destruction is not the practical application of a negative theory. I am certainly not saying that destruction is not worthwhile as a practice or set of practices; but I am saying that nihilists by definition reject the overidentification of any practice with their negation of existing moralities and normative approaches to ethics. It is my sense that, once the nihilist position exists as something other than a caricature, the other positions will be increasingly



undermined from within and without.

The third consequence is that *ethical nihilism is more than a theory*. It is a way of living and thinking, a form-of-life in which the two are not separate. That Rousselle discusses it only as a theory leaves it to the rest of us to elaborate what else it is, what it looks like, as some say, or how it is practiced. It is my sense that he was able to write this book because of events and situations in his life, in the milieu, in other places. So when I invoke the practical aspect of nihilism, having already said that it cannot be reduced to any practice or set of practices, I mean two things. First, that I mean to underline the unusual tone of all the practices of those that accept some version of the perspective that there is no Outside (to capitalism, civilization, or the existent), or that are profoundly skeptical about any proposed measures to get Outside. Second, that to speak of practices related to ethical nihilism continues to make it seem like a theory that endorses or suggests a course of action, while its interest is precisely that it may not do so. Monsieur Dupont's phrase Do Nothing is relevant here: "Do Nothing... was and remains a provocation. [...] Do Nothing is an immediate reflection of Do Something and its moral apparatus."<sup>10</sup> From weird practices to doing nothing: this is precisely the enigmatic space where anti-politics converges with ethics. Yes, there is a gap, perhaps a colossal gap, between the implosion-moment of societies like ours and the eternal meaninglessness of value claims and moral codes. Anti-politics might be said only to address the former, while ethical nihilism ultimately invokes the latter. But anti-politics may also reveal ethical nihilism; our willful action may accelerate the ex- or implosion of the world to reveal more of the meaninglessness it has been designed to conceal.

The fourth consequence is that *nihilism is also a condition*. It is not merely those who make it their business to think and act in the world that are living with nihilism. The force of ethical nihilism is not so much in being a position one advocates as in its undermining of others' claims to certainty. If we are able to do this sometimes it is because there are many

others who, in a rapidly decomposing society, more or less consciously grasp the hollowness in every code of action. Take this passage from Heidegger as an illustration:

The realm for the essence and event of nihilism is metaphysics itself, always assuming that by "metaphysics" we are not thinking of a doctrine or only of a specialized discipline of philosophy but of the fundamental structure of beings in their entirety ... Metaphysics is the

## Rousselle repeatedly falls into the intellectualist trap of describing actions as the result of pre-existing theoretical attitudes

space of history in which it becomes destiny for the supersensory world, ideas, God, moral law, the authority of reason, progress, the happiness of the greatest number, culture, and civilization to forfeit their constructive power and to become void.<sup>11</sup>

Dare I add here that something of this condition was also gestured toward in a few precious texts on postmodernism, texts which raised tremendous questions about their present, and by extension ours, only to be buried in an avalanche of increasingly unimaginative discussions, as if to systematically shut down the possibility of such questioning?

What these four consequences add up to is perhaps something on the order of a paradigm shift that some of us are perhaps dimly beginning to perceive. Or perhaps it is much bigger and more terrifying than a paradigm shift could ever be. Rousselle overestimates the importance and centrality of post-anarchism to anarchist theory (and, needless to say, various milieus), and his claim that his theorizing after post-anarchism consolidates the shift from pluralist/relativist post-anarchism, with its reformist and radical liberal tendencies, and a fully nihilist theory expressing the latent destructive content of anarchism, is misplaced. But increasing emphasis on nihilist



ideas, and the increasing prevalence of what could be called nihilist measures, is a condition that involves us all to some degree. And we have tried to think it through and respond. The call for an end to government instead of a better, more democratic, more egalitarian form of government is ancient. The call for the abolition of work instead of just, fair, or dignified work is decades old, at least. How many of us no longer criticize competition so as to contrast it with cooperation, but because the victory it offers is laughably meaningless? How many of us have more or less explicitly shifted from advocating a plurality of genders to pondering the conditions for the abolition of gender as such? What to make of the increasing opposition to programmatism<sup>12</sup> and demands in moments of confrontation and occupation?

I intuit two things here: that pluralism seems to continually reveal its relativist core more and more often, and that the revelation of the relativist core will make it increasingly easier for the nihilist position to be stated, with all of its disruptive effects. Conversely, as I have suggested, *merely stating the nihilist position coherently has effects*. I propose that those interested make it their business to deploy the triplicity. To which I will immediately add: *there will be stupid and parodic versions of this moment. For some of us this moment will be lived entirely as parody and stupidity*. But there will also be, for some, an opportunity to refine what *our* anarchism has always meant, not as the direction history or society is going in, not as the truth of a tradition, or as an ideal of any sort, but as that which breaks from such orientations in the most absolute sense: the negating prefixes *a-*, *an-*, *anti-*... anti-politics as a provisional orientation, branching out into countless refusals.<sup>13</sup> Our ethics emerges and gives itself to thought only where breaks and refusals clear a sufficient space. We know almost nothing about such spaces, so our ethics might also be defined as the provisional *disorientation* with which we approach our ways of living, the interminable and necessary *skepticism* that characterizes our thinking's motion. (A)

## Endnotes

- 1 "Il senso più comune non è il più vero," wrote the heretic Giordano Bruno: "The most common sense is not the truest." The type of thinking I invoke here takes its distance from what the Mass regards as common sense.
- 2 *Theory of Bloom*, LBC Books version, 144. These phrases condense an entire trajectory of writing on ethics that encompasses Deleuze, Agamben, and Badiou, beginning, naturally, with Spinoza and Nietzsche.
- 3 It is also fair to say that, since pluralism is such a key aspect of liberalism, many anarchists simply cling to a kind of radicalized liberalism as their ethics, and their politics, not because of any gaps in their thinking, but because they actually are radical liberals. The problem, of course, is either that they do not recognize it, or that they will not admit it. At least Chomsky, in the 1970 lecture "Government in the Future," admitted as much, advocating a confluence of radical Marxism and anarchism as "the proper and natural extension of classical liberalism into the era of advanced industrial society."
- 4 I do not intend to attack what is all too easy to criticize in a book framed as an intervention into post-anarchism, a topic that I am not concerned with, and which I am sure is less than popular with the readership of *AJODA*. I happily leave the task of settling the accounts of this book with the proponents and opponents of post-anarchism to those who find it worthwhile. I similarly leave to one side the discussion of the relation of Georges Bataille's ideas to ethical nihilism in the book's final chapter.
- 5 Rousselle only makes occasional references to "classical" anarchists other than Kropotkin, who is his major case study. I take it this is because Kropotkin is thought of as the most explicitly ethical of the original anarchists, and also because he has been the object of sustained attention among post-anarchists.
- 6 Rousselle frames this claim as a claim about theory, and the conditions under which theories are formulated. He does not frame this as a



historical argument, although the idea of conditions obviously implies theory. For example, he references in passing the shared approach of the Russian Nihilists and Kropotkin in a discussion of an article by John Slatter: "Slatter took Kropotkin at his word when he argued that '[anarchists must] bend the knee to no authority whatsoever, however respected [...] accept no principle so long as it is unestablished by reason' (Kropotkin as quoted in Slatter, 261). Here, however, Kropotkin's rationalism was maintained but only to reveal a useful parallel: 'The appeal to reason rather than to tradition or custom in moral matters is one made earlier in Russian intellectual history by the so-called 'nihilists'' (ibid.). Like Kropotkin, the Russian 'nihilists' (or 'The New People', as they were called) adopted a rationalist/positivist discourse as a way to achieve a distance from the authority of the church and consequently from metaphysical philosophies. The meta-ethics of Kropotkin's work ... thus reveals, not 'mutual aid,' but a tireless negativity akin to the spirit of the Russian nihilists: '[the anarchist must] fight against existing society with its upside-down morality and look forward to the day when it would be no more' (Kropotkin as cited by Slatter, ibid)" (146-147).

- 7 This is my way of rewriting the contrast between manifest and latent content that Rousselle derives from Freud. Rousselle's way of explicating this has but two statements, one showing the latent content of the other through elimination. Mine has more to do with pushing a thought to its limit. They converge in that, for this to happen, thinking has to engage with the unthought...
- 8 This is obviously where one should reiterate the argument made by Shawn Wilbur and Jesse Cohn against the first wave of post-anarchists: they had built their collective case on a caricaturesque reduction of historical anarchists in their reconstruction of "classical anarchism." Many egoists, for example, explicitly stated what Rousselle claims can only be grasped as a latent content (i.e. what appears only when explicit statements are analyzed). The best one can say about Rousselle's analysis in this regard is that it destabilizes what many consider to be the center and the margins of the anarchist tradition, or

canon. But it does leave one wondering why he discusses Kropotkin at such length instead of Stirner or Novatore, for example, who are referenced only in passing. Is there something at stake for him in emphasizing ethical nihilism as a latent content as opposed to a manifest one?

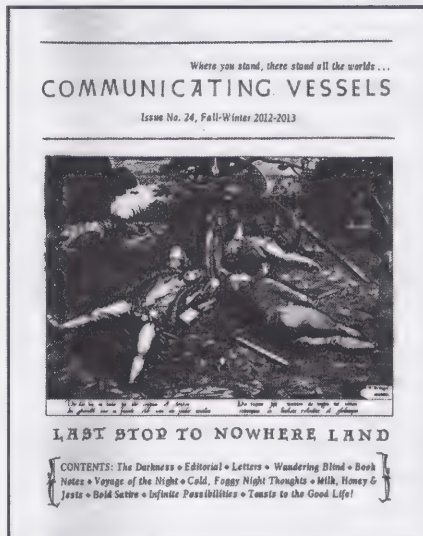
- 9 For those not familiar with it, this term was introduced by John Moore to refer to anarchist theory and practice after the Situationist International. It might be considered telling that Moore offered the term in a review of a foundational post-anarchist book by Todd May. The review was originally published in *Anarchist Studies*, but I know it from a zine called *Second Wave Anarchy*
- 10 *Nihilist Communism*, 198.
- 11 "Nietzsche's word: God is Dead," in *Off the Beaten Track*, 165.
- 12 A useful term I borrow from *Théorie Communiste*. As they define it: "a theory and practice of class struggle in which the proletariat finds, in its drive toward liberation, the fundamental elements of a future social organisation which become the programme to be realised. This revolution is thus the affirmation of the proletariat, whether as a dictatorship of the proletariat, workers' councils, the liberation of work, a period of transition, the withering of the state, generalised self-management, or a 'society of associated producers'." "Much Ado About Nothing," in *Endnotes* 1, 155.
- 13 Speaking for myself, I underestimated the negative in the political sphere, the power of negativity (the attitude towards world, society, spectacle, whatever sets itself up as the All). My temperament led me to emphasize ethical questions about how to live a life of joy, about the places of affirmation (individualism/egoism, the aesthetic sensibility that never lies). I do think one can affirm one's own life, affirm the nothing in it, so to speak, as one resists. Until I realized this, I drifted near this space, but never really knew it. I remained confused about the negative, about the effectiveness of the prefixes *a-*, *an-*, *anti-* ...



# Media Reviews

Reviews by Arlian [A] and Lawrence Jarach [LJ]

**Anarchy does exchanges with anarchist and anti-state, anti-capitalist periodicals.  
We try to review all such periodicals received, so send them to us.**



## Communicating Vessels, # 24

(Fall-Winter 2012-2013)  
P.O. Box 2048  
Tucson, Arizona 85702  
no price listed

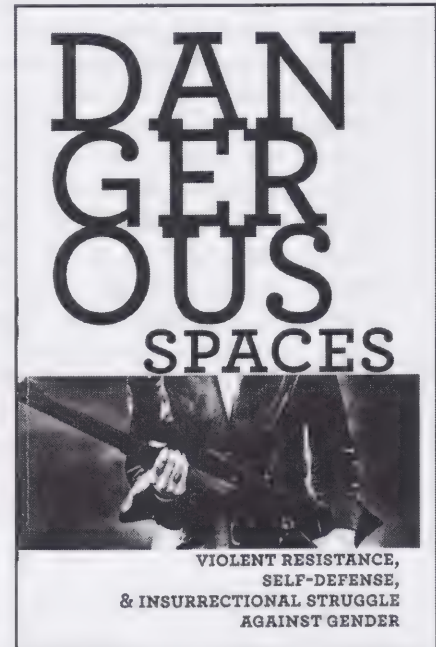
**I**F YOU CAN BELIEVE IT, I'VE NEVER read *Communicating Vessels* before. You can't help but notice how lovely it is! Really: the layout, full-color cover, and the artwork are all amazingly exquisite. Unfortunately, the content wasn't quite as awe inspiring. Actually I found myself totally baffled by the editorial piece, which was all about the 2012 American presidential elections. His opening paragraph is this:

Let me be frank, I have seldom given even a scintilla of attention to the nitty-gritty of partisan politics. I have always

stuck to the basic details: a working knowledge of at least a few of the candidates, an understanding of what they stand for at base and an idea of how each candidate may end up faring in an election. (3)

Which, to me, sounds like someone who is paying attention to electoral politics because that is more knowledge than I usually have about any election. I usually only know what I can't escape from knowing. But then, oh then! he goes on to say "...The 2012 elections have proven to be something different....this election season [is] unlike any other. None of it seems real: the game, the actors, the stage..."(3)

He then rambles for a few pages mostly about Mitt Romney and his Mormon background and then fin-this presidential election promises to be like no other in American history..."(6). From my viewpoint, this election is just like every other. As lovely as *Communicating Vessels* is, nothing can make up for interesting content, or lack thereof. [A]



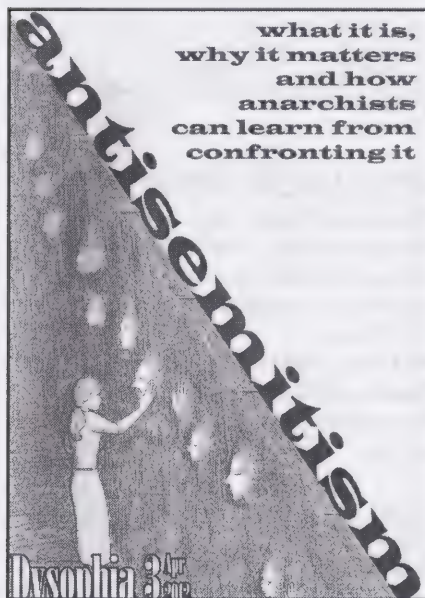
## Dangerous Spaces:

**Violent Resistance, Self-Defense,  
& Insurrectional Struggle  
Against Gender**  
Untorelli Press  
([untorellipress.noblogs.org](http://untorellipress.noblogs.org))  
44 pages.  
No price listed

**T**HERE'S JUST SOMETHING I LOVE about the whole queer nihilism tendency. The sort of refractory attitude of not giving a shit about what others think, the kind of amorality I associate with the best of Max Stirner (with perhaps a little Nietzschean contempt thrown in), the way most of the authors manage to stir up my emotions without relying on being stupid or maudlin. That's no mean feat



for an old fart like me. This pamphlet collects some of the best of what queer nihilism has to offer, both intelligent and emotionally eruptive. The violence in it isn't all that frightening or even that forceful, but there's no hand-wringing, or remorse, or guilt undermining the power of taking the issue of life and death into our own hands. Whether queer bashers or cops (or both), the targets to be resisted are the ones whose ability to harm (both emotionally and physically) almost never gets challenged. Well, these faggots and dykes and everyone else who gets called names for being themselves, aren't taking it lying down – unless it's with each other! “Until the last rapist is hung with the guts of the last frat boy.” [LJ]



### Dysopia #3:

**Antisemitism: What it is, why it matters and how anarchists can learn from confronting it**  
c/o CRC

16 Sholebroke Ave

Leeds LS7 3HB

England

88 pages.

No price listed

**T**HE RACISM THAT DARE NOT speak its name, antisemitism (or Judeophobia in the jargon of some scholars of this type of bigotry) is a tricky subject to tackle. The intersections of nationalism, ethnic chauvinism, prejudice, racism and paranoia complicate any attempted objectivity when analyzing the hatred of Jews, or the anti-hatred of Jews. The advantage of this issue of *Dysopia* is that it is a broad overview with different perspectives and angles rather than a single attempt in so few pages to analyze and then dispense with antisemitism. This is also the disadvantage. While there will always be stronger and weaker contributions to any anthology, this problem is magnified when trying to tackle as slippery and ultimately incoherent a worldview as Jew-hatred. I encountered the second longest contribution, “The Past Didn’t Go Anywhere; Making Resistance to Antisemitism Part of All Our Movements,” several years ago. Even with its limits (and what I would consider errors), I liked it then and I like it today; it is probably the best radical analysis of the distinctions and overlaps of antisemitism with left antizionism. The difficulty for me with this 20-page pamphlet is that it assumes the good faith of leftists, an assumption I cannot share. The author presents an explicitly anti-sectarian attempt to enlighten leftists (almost all of whom are certainly antizionist) with the uncomfortable similarities with the tropes of antisemitism. I have encountered too few left antizionists who already understand the dangers of antisemitism as a form of racism, and even fewer who are interested in being educated by a bunch of (allegedly) hypersensitive (allegedly) white (allegedly) middle class Jews. Perhaps this is best summed up in the conclusion of the editor’s contribution:

“There is also a need to recognise that the term ‘antisemitism’ is both poorly understood and contested which leads to a lot of bad practice.” [LJ]



### Earth First! Journal

Volume 32, #1

PO Box 964

Lake Worth FL 33460

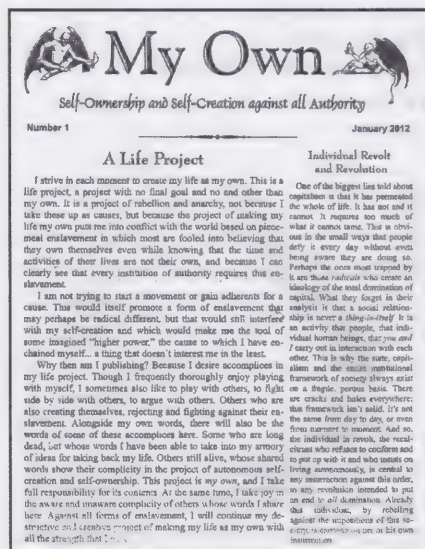
64 pages.

\$6.50

**I** EXPECTED TO FOAM AT THE mouth in rage while reading this, but it actually wasn’t nearly as annoying as I thought it would be. There were some things that were stupid; I alternated between puzzled, annoyed, and amused. Perhaps the worst example is the semi-insane sounding slogan “No War But the Eco Class War” – I mean, for real, – did they throw a bunch of cliché and outdated words into a hat and make a slogan of whatever came out? Because this statement is total meaningless garbage. It also appears possible that they have an editor whose job it is to replace every use of the word “earth” or “planet” or “home” (or any other synonym) for this rock that we live



on with the word Gaia. Other than those things, this issue of *Earth First! Journal* was mostly a collection of decently written articles reporting about various environmental issues. There was even a delightful little article explaining why the internet is a massive energy suck and why so called green-energy-solutions will never actually solve any problems. It also had reports on wolf eradication programs in Oregon, various political prisoners address and health updates, and a really terrible short fiction piece, as well as an invitation to the 2012 rendezvous. Also, I refused to even read the zine-within-a-zine insert from the book *Deep Green Resistance* by the cult-leader Derrick Jensen. All in all, this magazine exemplifies exactly what I hate about Earth First!ers, and other kinds of Eco-Activists. It's not the politics exactly – I'm passionately anti-civ myself – it's the people and the culture. [A]



## My Own

Issues 1 (January 2012) - 5

(September 2012)

5802 N. Mississippi Ave

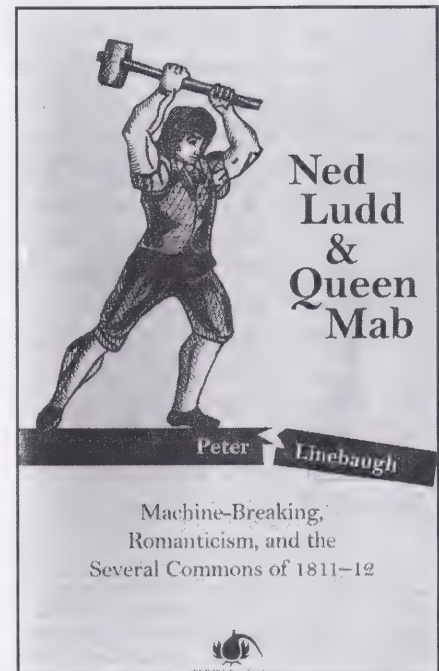
Portland, OR 97217

\$1 or two first class stamps

\$5 for a 6-issue subscription

GIVEN THAT APIO IS A LONG TIME contributor to this magazine, we are obviously not the most unbiased people when it comes to reviewing his work. However, I actually have to admit a secret: as much as I like Apio as a person, his writing has never spoken to me personally. I think this has as much to do with my own personal preferences as much as demographics—Apio has always had a bombastic and roof-raising writing style, which isn't surprising when one considers his background, but that writing just doesn't speak to me. I actually prefer straightforward and conversational—even dry--writing styles to ones that are poetic or passionate. My Own's linguistic style seems to be a bit more moderate than usual, or maybe I'm just more open to passionate writing than I used to be. In terms of content, My Own reads a lot like a paper version of a blog (contrasted to a personal-zine; one could categorize this as one, but I think to do so would be limiting, and unrepresentative of the scope and quality of the topics covered). My Own is where Apio publicly fleshes out his own. The very first article in the very first issue is called "A Life Project," where he explains his. As is (and should be) the case, my own is very different from Apio's, so My Own didn't appeal to me personally much more than any of his other writing ever has, given my aforementioned preferences. However, I think if you like to wrestle with deeply personal philosophical questions (what is an individual; conceptions of fate; definitions of rebellion; egoist interactions, and much, much more), and you've previously liked Apio's literary creations, then definitely read this zine. An added bonus is that Apio sometimes discusses in depth different terms Stirner used in the *Ego and His Own*, which is very helpful and interesting for people who currently

read Stirner, or who are eagerly awaiting Apio's new translation. [A]



## Ned Ludd & Queen Mab:

Machine Breaking,  
Romanticism, and the Several  
Commons of 1811-1812

by Peter Linebaugh

PM Press

PO Box 23912

Oakland CA 94623

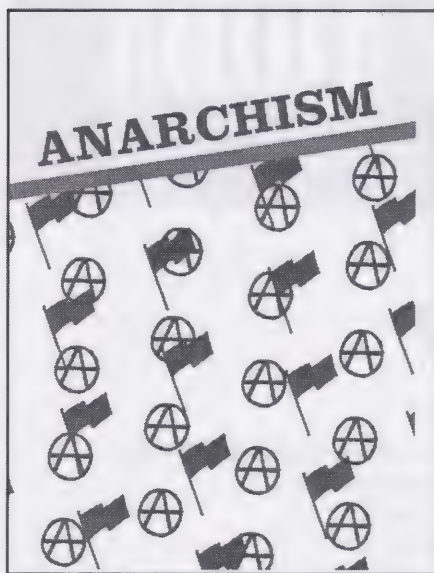
45 pages

\$6.96

THIS PAMPHLET IS AN ATTEMPT by the author to show Luddites should be taken more seriously by academia. He links the Luddites to contemporary English literature – namely Percy Shelley's poem *Queen Mab* – as well as indigenous and slave uprisings in America, among other things. When he sticks simply to the past, Linebaugh does a fairly adequate (if a little vague) job of articulating his point. He fails pretty spectacularly when he tries to link the Luddite



standpoint with an anti-nuclear one, referencing the Fukushima nuclear meltdown frequently. Also, as someone who had never read Queen Mab before, it might have been helpful to reprint the poem in its entirety. Overall it's a fine, if a bit drab, little piece, though one can't help but wonder why exactly one should be concerned with what academics think of anything. [A]



## Words

[anarchiststudies.org](http://anarchiststudies.org)  
[pistolsdrawn.org](http://pistolsdrawn.org)  
 no prices listed

**I**N NOVEMBER OF 2011, THE Institute for Anarchist Studies announced their decision to print a series of pamphlets "...exploring commonly used terms, in the interests of developing a common 'lexicon' among those within the radical Left. Inspired by the emerging occupy movement, but not exclusive to it, the IAS hopes that these pamphlets will be widely distributed and accessible to people who are newly approaching 'politics from below.' Each pamphlet will include a short essay by a contemporary radical leftist

author defining concepts such as capitalism, white supremacy, worker self-management, patriarchy, the state, class, solidarity, and many others."

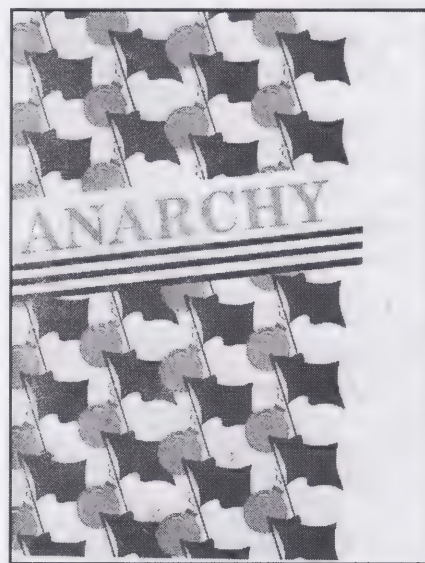
In January 2012, Pistols Drawn (the "site for nihilist anarchists") announced their response, a series of pamphlets "...exploring language in the interest of destroying it. The radical Left has too long attempted to define the terms of what it means to resist the existing order, from the French Revolution to the Occupation Movement. Pistols Drawn hopes that these new pamphlets give the not-left ammunition in the war against language-as-ownership. Words are the simple things we use to destroy politics, be they from below us, above us, or horizontally from our confused friends. Each pamphlet will include words defining a form of our hostility towards the existing order."

While I do happen to have a few small criticisms about the IAS work (some the pamphlets contain a few special gems, like in *White Supremacy*, when Joel Olsen says "All oppression is equally morally wrong"), the content of both of these sets of pamphlets is pretty much unremarkable. I actually think the word choices and presentation of these pamphlets tell us a lot more about the two trajectories these groups represent than the actual definitions given. The IAS's words were Anarchism, Gender, Power, Colonialism, and White Supremacy, whereas Pistols Drawn chose Anarchy, Attack!, and Society.

The most interesting difference shows itself in the choices of anarchy vs *anarchism*. How is anarchy different from *anarchism*, and why is this difference important enough to comment on? According to Merriam-Webster, the suffix *-ism* changes a word to mean "a: doctrine, theory, or religion or b: adherence to a system or a class of principles." To some of us, anarchism represents a homogenous

groupthink, a codified dogmatic identity that those of us who are interested in anarchy are opposed to. This sentiment manifests itself in the popular (and trite) slogan "Down with Anarchism, Up with Anarchy!" Beyond the actual words themselves, the way both groups decided to present their definitions is very telling. IAS chose a specific author for each word to give one cohesive definition, whereas Pistols Drawn chose selections from many different people that seem to represent the spirit of the word. Overall, IAS's pamphlets are significantly more traditional and less humorous. It's not just that IAS's words are staid and stodgy (though they are), but that these words represent an ideological worldview that nihilist anarchists actively reject.

This is the crux of the issue between these two tendencies within the radical scene: Left anarchists desire an orthodox and parochial worldview, whereas nihilist anarchists want a heterodox one that allows for flexibility and idiosyncrasy. [A]





# Periodicals and publishers exchanging with AJODA

## **Alternative Press Center**

PO Box 47739  
Chicago IL 60647  
*Publishers of the Alternative Press Index*

## **Anarchist Studies**

c/o Dr Ruth Kinna  
Dept of European Studies,  
Loughborough University  
Loughborough LE11 3TU  
England  
*The go-to place for the best academic  
anarchism has to offer*

## **Any Time Now**

Affinity Place  
Argenta BC V0G 1B0  
Canada  
*Occasional journal of politics and poetry*

## **AREDHIS**

BP 20306  
60203 Compiègne Cedex  
France  
*Publishers of Troploin newsletter  
(in English)*

## **Archivio Famiglia Berneri**

Flamma Chessa, Via Travolata, 6  
42100 Reggio Emilia  
Italy

## **ASR (Anarcho-Syndicalist Review)**

PO Box 42531  
Philadelphia PA 19101  
*Theoretical and historical publication of  
English and American anarcho-syndicalism*

## **Autonomedia**

PO Box 568 Williamsburgh Stn  
Brooklyn NY 11211  
*Publisher of radical books*

## **@venue**

PO Box 8187  
Hilton WA 6163  
Australia  
*Activism, poetry, and reviews from Down  
Under*

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New York NY 10116

*Newspaper of the Industrial Workers of the World*

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*Punk's not dead, at least according to this venerable flagship*

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**Modesto Anarcho**

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Modesto CA 95353  
*Class-war insurrectionary journal*

**Prisoners' Dilemma**

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Seattle WA 98145  
*Intended "to create a loosely defined anarchist/anti-authoritarian zine which might appeal to people unfamiliar with those currents of thought"*

**The Rag**

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Dublin 1  
Ireland  
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*Monthly Spanish-language newspaper of the other anarcho-syndicalists, the CGT*

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Homewood IL 60430  
*Publishers of pamphlets and flyers in support of various prisoners, including some anarchists*

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998 Bloor St W PO Box 10571  
Toronto ON M6H 4H9  
Canada  
*A journal that tries to bridge the gap between grad students and street activism, tending quite unfortunately toward Popular Frontism*



# Embarrassments to the Milieu

Christian Edler

***Editors' note:** We haven't singled out the fantasy universe of NEFAC (and its remnants in Common Struggle) in a few years, but we couldn't resist featuring this incoherent manifesto. If it's true, as our comrade laments, that "in a nationwide context anarchists are practically irrelevant," then the corrective is surely not creating yet another doomed continental federation just for the sake of having a recognizable national presence with "hundreds of regular dues-paying members" in order to create a treasury to bail out "anarchist organizers." The text has been edited for space considerations as well as to maintain a decent ratio of embarrassment to filler.*

**O**VER 150 YEARS OF THE ANARCHIST theoretical and organizing tradition have passed, yet anarchist influence in the United States is practically non-existent. In some local contexts, we do see occasional anarchist influence, but in a nationwide context

anarchists are practically irrelevant.

There has been a conversation brewing for a few years among some anarchists. This conversation has moved forward specifically in a grouping of organizations that have come together in recent years around the Class

Struggle Anarchist Conferences. Since the first Class Struggle Anarchist Conference in New York City in 2008, it's been increasingly clear that these different organizations have a great deal of agreement and could be strengthened by unification into a nationwide



anarchist organization.

### **Why Anarchist Organization in the First Place?**

A great deal of literature already exists on the question of anarchist specific organizations and the role of such a revolutionary organization. For those who aren't familiar with these traditions, many of the organizations already involved in this process are explicitly informed by dual-organizationalist, especifista, platformist, and syndicalist traditions. These traditions raise the importance of anarchists organizing specifically as anarchists to spread and further develop the influence and understanding of our revolutionary ideas alongside more broad-based social movements.

### **Solidarity at Scale**

When anarchist organizers around the country face repression by the state or bosses, or are engaged in particularly difficult or important campaigns, the ability to coordinate national solidarity in a unified way can be instrumental. Bail or legal funds can be immediately paid off from the treasury of a nationwide organization with hundreds of regular dues-paying members. When a fight of national or international significance is happening, members could coordinate solidarity efforts around the country. When hot-spots of struggle pop up, anarchist organizers from around the country could be sent to participate in the on-the-ground organizing.

### **Open to Various Levels of Participation**

Part of what keeps so much of the anarchist movement small and fairly homogenous is that in effect we require all participants to immediately become high-level thinkers and organizers. For most people, particularly those most affected by the disastrous consequences of the state and capitalism, constant organizing simply isn't possible. An effective organization is capable of

accommodating various levels of involvement, and making it easy for members to move fluidly through those levels of involvement. A unitary nationwide organization would allow members to join without requiring that they become such effective and committed organizers as to have to build chapters immediately, but could help to ensure that whatever level of commitment they can agree to can have a positive impact.

### **Impact Politics and Organization on a National Scale**

When those broad-based anti-war organizations are working at a national level, for anarchists to have an impact on their strategies and tactics, we need to coordinate at a national level as well. Rather than have this happen accidentally through networks of friends, why not do this purposefully on an ideological and strategic basis?

The same can be said about most major unions. We often complain the activities of workers within the major unions throughout the country don't match our political or strategic orientation. Well, why would they? We have zero capacity to coordinate the activities of revolutionaries in the rank and file of these organizations.

### **Ability to Mass-Mobilize Effectively**

In the case where anarchists throughout the country are trying to instigate a fight rather than influence the direction of a larger organization, we could actually decide on strategies and tactics together and mass-mobilize on a regional or national scale. To have the capacity to push issues forward as anarchists, we wouldn't have to continue trying to put a radical spin to an otherwise liberal effort.

### **Our Moment is Now!**

The economic context of the United States is drastically changing and this is having an impact politically. We need to take advantage of this moment, because

these moments don't come frequently

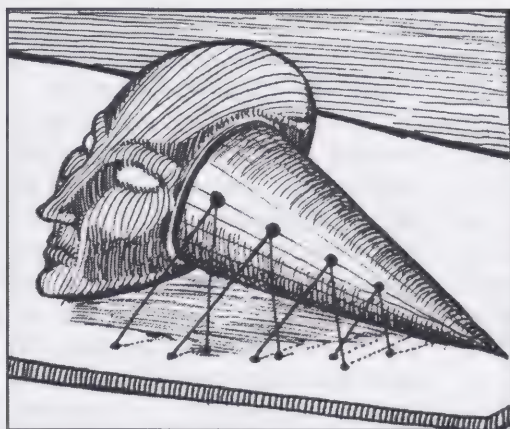
To miss this moment may mean setting the anarchist movement in the US back decades. As the nation's economy slowly implodes, wealth concentration becomes increasingly obvious to millions of people, and the social safety net gets destroyed it becomes clear to millions that the status quo can't maintain itself and that drastic change is necessary. We are foolish if we think that capitalists, fascists, authoritarian communists, and others won't be organizing in massive and coordinated ways to take advantage of the moment and manipulate millions of people to fight against their own interests. If we don't make building anarchist organization on a nationwide scale a priority, then we should understand that we are effectively surrendering the moment to other forces.

Instead let's take the challenges being thrown at us as an opportunity to build and legitimize to millions our visions of a revolutionary anarchist society. In the coming months, I hope that we will be announcing the creation of a nationwide US-based revolutionary anarchist organization. Let's get behind this effort quickly and powerfully to show that our ideas are more than just ideas, but an inspired road-map of mass struggle to a genuinely free and equal world.

[rocredandblack.org](http://rocredandblack.org)  
[commonstruggle.org](http://commonstruggle.org)



John Henri



# Bad Medicine

## Green Blooded by Liana Doctrines

Most of the herbalists who were instrumental in creating and recording this collective system of healing will never receive recognition, yet we carry the seeds of their knowledge each time we use plants as medicine... It is our collective treasury, our birthright, and it is meant to be freely shared. <sup>1</sup>

**O**VER-DRUGGED AND UNDERCURED we cannot continue to depend on the current medical industry. What passes for the healing system the us is predominately pain and symptom suppression, usually in the form of a single chemical pill prescribed by a practitioner who has typically spent less than a half-hour with a patient. Their licenses to practice are expensive, peer- and government-approved endorsements, which say nothing of their particular abilities beyond their capacity to jump through bureaucratic hoops and regurgitate textbook jargon while deprived of sleep for years. Practitioners of this medical Science use the sick and infirm in the first and third worlds as their human test subjects; the results of these experiments are mixed, leading to an estimated annual 225,000 iatrogenic deaths just in the us. By creating a sexy, bureaucratic monopoly, this industry has secured the majority of our health resources within a few generations. It has simultaneously forged a psychological strangle-hold on community health

by convincing the public that only medical experts can know what is best for every stranger's (aka patient's) health. We must scrutinize any naïve faith we have in these Doctors with Big Machines, recognizing their part in industrial society, and their contribution to resulting diseases. This is no easy task, as this faith has been carefully cultivated by the ruling class, and their public relations servants, to appear as if it has always been this way, and is infallible.

The use of medicinal plants to treat dis-eases (which is still almost universal in non-industrialized societies) was attacked in Europe and much of the Americas, not by one act of treachery, but continuously over several hundred years, so that even the casual growing and use of a handful of non-culinary plants has been lost to most people in these areas. These severances are a painful part of the enclosure of the commons, and reminders of the cultural devastation perpetrated by the ruling classes since the Middles Ages. Many of the early attempts to control

herbal practices in Europe were led by Christian church leaders, which understood that control of succor meant control of bodies, and later by merchants wishing to make a profit.

An example of this began in the 1300s, when there were bitter wars over whether to include hops in beers and ales. Protestants and merchants strongly lobbied for laws to mandate the inclusion of hops in all ales and beers, thereby displacing gruit. Hops tend to sedate and lower the libido, while gruit herbs are aphrodisiac, narcotic, and euphoric – which Protestants found morally objectionable. Gruit production was also controlled exclusively by the Catholic Church, and anyone wanting to brew had to buy from them, which many merchants resented. The puritanical aversion to sex and euphoria, and the interests of profiteers won this particular debate in the 1500s. Though the ultimate Protestant desire of sobriety and removal of all pain relief failed, they did succeed in instilling a sense of legal and moral horror in the use of any such herbs. Coca, opium,



and cannabis are other ready examples which have similar stories.

These and other attempts to eliminate the familiar and traditional uses of medicinal plants from among common people in Europe and Britain did not entirely succeed, and early colonists in the Americas brought many of their traditional herbs with them. These old-world medicinals were combined with whatever healers of the time could glean of the native knowledge of plants, even as the native communities were systematically destroyed. Samuel Thomson is perhaps the most famous of 19th century herbal practitioners. His system of medicine appealed to egalitarians because it encouraged each individual to administer his or her own treatment, and most rurally located families relied on Thomsonian Medicine. At the same time, licensed

physicians, with their treatments of mercury and bleeding, were being harshly criticized. The licensed doctors resented the success of Thomson and his followers, as well as the criticisms of their techniques, and they formed the American Medical Association in 1847 to overpower these practitioners. At the same time state legislatures began to regulate medical practice, creating legal divisions in medicine in favor of formal education, effectively defining legitimate medical practice along class lines.

Despite the formation of the AMA and their defamation of herbalists and other natural practitioners, in the 1930s many Americans were still using herbal remedies in their homes. The industrialists and capitalists behind the emerging drug companies saw easily obtained herbs as competition.

They launched a marketing campaign which emphasized that herbs were old-fashioned products used by old, poor, and uneducated people. They simultaneously mass produced the inexpensive, synthetic drugs which were standardized, purified – and tested on animals. Pills, which were new and therefore fashionable, were molecularly specific weapons targeting a single symptom or germ, (never mind the side effects). As government subsidized the research and development of these drugs, regulations were changed to support corporations and eliminate the home use of herbs.

Even with the current pharmaceutical domination of community health resources, the PR campaign for drugs is still alive and well. Commercials encourage people to take charge of their lives by requesting specific medications





from their doctor. TV shows glorify the heroics of these practitioners, putting a sexy gloss on their patronizing view of the broken, petulant, and ignorant masses. These programs encourage potential patients to sympathize, identify, and engage more submissively with their godlike physicians.

What does this mean for the herbalism still practiced today? It means that what we call Western Herbal Medicine is a cobbled together system, a product of interrupted European and British traditions, scattered interpretations of Native American plant uses, and more recent moves to combine these with scientific and/or re-wilding experiments. It means herbalists are not immune from the expert-with-a-cure mindset or the desire to create and enforce legal standards of formal education and practice which conform to scientific rules. This pressure divides herbalists; some desire to remain ungoverned, while others yearn to join the fringes of mainstream medicine as their second line of support, and perhaps become officially recognized. It means capitalists are already making money off recent attempts to reclaim our herbal heritage. They contentedly offer scientifically proven, purified, and standardized herbal extracts, which make medicinal plants resemble the (now) more familiar pharmaceuticals (never mind the increased side effects, again). Happily, regardless of the desires of some herbalists, the abilities of plants don't lend themselves to being successfully mass delivered, and Western Herbalists' philosophy of healing honors this fact.

In sharp contrast to the practitioners

of medical Science, who view patients as broken body-machines, in which fear rules a schedule of tests based on age and gender, with the goal of symptom suppression, many herbalists encourage daily attention to health and subtle physical shifts by both the healer(s) and the person seeking healing. Herbalists may also challenge the definition of health as a perfectly symptomless



moment, and offer that a more empowered definition is the ability to relate fluidly to the challenges of being in a body, adjusting our relationship to exercise, food, medicines, our genetic heritage, and our emotional and spiritual conditions as desired. Practitioners of this art may look more for the underlying causes of distress, and seek to support the body in regaining its equilibrium. Though herbs can be used in acute or sudden-onset diseases, they shine most effectively in

addressing long-term issues with the regular use of supportive plants, where the line between food and medicine blurs. This level of attention is not popular in our fast-paced, run till you drop, grab as much comfort along the way as you can, capitalist nightmare civilization. But by using plants as medicines we tap into our collective human heritage and wisdom, and this can be deeply satisfying. Not surprisingly, anarchists seem disproportionately drawn to this system of healing, where alienation from the wild, dangerous, and unpredictable is minimal. I chose to study Western Herbal Medicine since it encompasses the traditions of my ancestry, where I reside, and because it is ungovernable and freely shared. Herbalism will always be resistant to centralization...it is simply too personal.

Let me be clear. While I desire the obliteration of the need for the current medical industry, it is not with some vague hope that we'll have enough folks around who know something about healing that we'll eventually figure it out; leaving the future open to meeting whatever challenges might arise is not a justification for lack of practical preparation. Those of us who would dissolve our dependence upon MDs must satisfy the void created with something more meaningful, something practical and effective. What is called for is nothing short of the re-creation of an intergenerational system of guidance and transference of skilled traditions; these are people's lives we are talking about after all. We can't simply buy a few books and start testing remedies on each other, naively believing it will all work out.

As one would expect, anarchists have already gotten started. At every



bookfair, zinefest, and infoshop, you are likely to be able to find a few zines on inexpensive, safe, effective, and easily accessible herbal medicines. I frequently view these pamphlets as attempts to pass on the uses of a few supportive herbs, much the way a grandmother would have in the 1800s. If presented responsibly, this smattering of information may help in the odd misadventure, but is not thorough enough training to alleviate our dependence on the medical industry. With years of study we find that we are able to treat ourselves well enough to improve our constitutions, prevent most illnesses, and resolve a few disorders, and so need to resort to the medical industry only when we are very ill or injured. And, when we do visit an MD it is not with a submissive deference, but with an intelligent self-assurance, knowing that if they have no drugs for our symptoms, or their drugs have undesirable side-effects, we have alternative, real choices. But even this small dependence is painful, as it embodies the loss of a complete healing tradition, and ties us to a sick capitalist treatment system.

There are even more reasons to cultivate herbalism in our lives. Seeking healing or instruction from a traditional healer or herbalist not only enriches our knowledge, but widens our communities, and supports the healers themselves. Already in the Bay Area several groups of practitioners are well established and active in our community. As we learn about herbs we are also invited to reclaim our interdependence with plants; they are our breathing partners, our nutrient cycling partners (if we allow our humanure to reach them), our lawless comrades, and if we want, our psychic and spiritual allies. They can be an endless source of inspiration.

From the time my great-grandmother showed me how to make her yellow-orange snapdragons open their jaws, I have been drawn to plants. I have

savored bitter flora, lain in shrubbery, vegetated with vegetation, and become companion to plants. I notice them, and they communicate to me about the environment we are sharing: the quality of the soil, the amount of sunlight, moisture, foot traffic, the presence of certain minerals or acids. I am continually aware of the plants around me: which are poisonous, edible, medicinal, mind-altering, irritating, or in need of attention. I am more present and thoughtful when I stop to pay attention to them. They touch a place inside me which is un-alienated, which is rooted to my surroundings. I am an herbalist. And, as an herbalist I claim my place among the eternal collective of ungoverned and ungovernable healers.

In these times of change, everything is being examined and either destroyed, rebuilt, or created from our hearts. Industrialism has affected every aspect of our lives - we are just starting to realize how much has been lost. Medicine is just one part of the machine that we have to take back and re-create into a form that works for the society we will become. Every herb, pill, and procedure should be judged on its sustainability and accessibility to small groups of people. We can start with ourselves, within our communities and circles, but should never stop expanding outwards until industrial medicine rusts in a forgotten grave, a victim of its own imbalances.<sup>12</sup> **A**

## Endnotes

- 1 Rosemary Gladstar's *Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health*, (Storey Publishing, 2008), p. 3
- 2 *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* Vol 284, No 4, July 26th 2000. Dr Barbara Starfield, MD, MPH, of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, shows that medical errors may be the third leading cause of death in the United States.
- 3 Most notable is the incineration of medical waste, which is the leading source of dioxin production in the US. Dioxins are some of the most toxic chemicals known to science. See "Hospitals and Plastics. Dioxin prevention and medical waste incinerators." 298 *Public Health Reports July/August 1996* \* Volume III. J Thornton, M McCally, P Orris, and J Weinberg (Center for Environmental Research and Conservation, Columbia University).
- 4 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbalism>
- 5 Gruit is a combination herbs used in the fermentation process. Though primarily composed of three herbs, (sweet gale, yarrow, and marsh rosemary), each brewer added other herbs (eg juniper berries, ginger, caraway seed, aniseed, nutmeg, and cinnamon), to construct unique tastes and flavors, and to vary the effects of their ales.
- 6 Stephen Harrold Buhner, *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers: the Secrets of Ancient Fermentation* (Siris Books, 1998), pp. 169-174
- 7 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_Thomson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Thomson)
- 8 Mathew Wood, *The Earthwise Herbal: A Complete Guide to New World Medicinal Plants* (North Atlantic Books, 2009), p. x-xii
- 9 Billie Potts, *Witches Heal: Lesbian Herbal Self-Sufficiency* (Du Reve Publications, 1988) p. 5
- 10 I refuse to call western herbal medicine, or any other healing modality "alternative"; this term implies that AMA-approved medicine is The Standard.
- 11 Michael Moore, *Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West* (Red Crane Books, 1995), p15
- 12 Laurel Luddite, "This Is Anarcho-Herbalism; Thoughts On Health and Healing For the Revolution" (used by permission of the author)



Author's introduction (2013)<sup>1</sup>

Anthropology is unique among the human sciences in putting an emphasis and value on cultural diversity, thus offering a cultural critique of the ethos of capitalism. In addition, anthropology emphasises peoples' shared humanity, enlarging our sense of community and placing us squarely within Nature. As a discipline, anthropology has therefore always placed itself at the interface between the humanities and the natural sciences. Sadly, in recent decades, anthropology's dual heritage has been challenged by two forms of extremists. Some anthropologists, influenced by postmodernism and hermeneutics, have repudiated social science entirely, conceiving anthropology as a purely "literary enterprise." Other anthropologists, influenced by the neo-Darwinists (Wilson, Dawkins, Pinker, et al), have tended to view anthropology as simply a sub-discipline of evolutionary biology. Embracing sociobiology and its offshoot evolutionary psychology, such anthropologists tend to see a tight linkage between genetic evolution and cultural history, and stress the biological bases of human social life and culture. Human nature, encoded in genes, is viewed as bearing the "archaic blueprint" of an earlier hunter-gathering existence, and via the Hunting Hypothesis (embraced by Wilson<sup>2</sup>), is interpreted as aggressive, territorial, competitive, and entrepreneurial, as well as implying a universal will to dominance. In my review of the early writings of Robert Ardrey<sup>3</sup> I critique this view of hunter-gathering societies, and its misleading portrayal of human nature.

# Scientific Myths: Man the Mighty Hunter

by Brian Morris

**T**HE GREEKS HAD A MYTH OF a past golden age. It relates to a State of Nature at the beginning of human history, when, according to the Roman poet Ovid, men used to cultivate good faith and virtue spontaneously without laws, punishment and fear did not exist, and the earth itself, untroubled and untouched by hoe, gave an abundance of good things. But when Saturn had been deposed by Jupiter, all things changed, and in place of good faith, Ovid writes, came "deceit and guilt and plots and violence and wicked lust for possession." Human beings no longer lived spontaneously but by plunder and stealth.

The egalitarian state of nature, so described by Ovid, is invariably and explicitly treated by everyone as a *myth*. But is it? It seems to me that there is a good deal more historical substance in the writings of the early Greek and Roman authors than is usually acknowledged. What they essentially describe is what Engels suggested was one of the most decisive revolutions every experienced by humankind – namely, the transition from a tribal society based on distinctions of age, gender, and kinship, to one based on class distinctions and state power. To peasant communities of the Mediterranean, suffering under the oppressive yoke of the Greek city states

– many as slaves – their tribal past must indeed have seemed like a golden age.

It is not that these early tribal communities lacked "law" or "politics," as some anthropologists have suggested, but rather as Pierre Clastres has attempted to delineate in his recent study of Amerindian cultures, *Society Against the State* (1977), that they had lacked coercive forms of political control.<sup>4</sup> The affirmation of the Stoics that all people were by nature free and equal was a political idea based not simply on ethical aspirations but on a tribal heritage. It would of course be erroneous and misleading to suggest that such tribal hunter-gathering communities – past and present –



epitomized harmony and egalitarianism in any absolute sense, but nevertheless a persuasive stress on communalism was the norm. Social stratification was never more than arm's length away, and conflict, though perhaps endemic, was of an interpersonal kind. And needless to say, most of these early human communities probably attained their basic livelihood with a minimum of labour. It is significant that Marx employed the concept "primitive communism" to describe such pre-class societies.

The historical record is of course replete with various suggestions about what life was like in an alleged State of Nature. Usually such suggestions, as the well-known discourses of Rousseau and Hobbes on the social contract, are little more than justifications for state forms of control. Often – and this includes more recent ones – they are more mythical than the writings of Ovid. Thus Janet Barkas, in an otherwise perceptive study of vegetarianism, *The Vegetable Passion* (1975), has postulated that human beings were "originally" cannibals, that we have progressed to meat-eating, and in the present era are becoming vegetarians. Presumably, extending this ethical progress, we would eventually, like the mystic Jain saint Mahavira, give up eating altogether and continue human existence on a purely ethereal plane!

Needless to say, there is no evidence for such an evolutionary scheme. But there seems to be no end to such speculations: and indeed myths about our tribal past abound in the literature. Wherever there is a state of "primitive promiscuity" (Bachofen) or a rigid patriarchy based on a "primal horde" (Darwin and Freud), a state of innocence, or one where life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes) – there seems to be a general feeling nowadays that such views reflected more the political stances and aspirations of the theorist rather than the social patterns of tribal or pre-state

societies. If anything, though these theories were advanced by eminent social scientists, they seem to diverge even more markedly from historical reality than did the musings of Ovid.

In recent years yet another myth has been propounded about our tribal hunter-gathering past; it is one which judging by its paperback distribution, has a wide circulation. This myth is indubitably associated with the writings of Robert Ardrey. His most recent book *The Hunting Hypothesis* (1976) is yet another rendering of this mythical tale. Like his earlier work, the book is highly readable, draws on the same illustrative material – mainly from the writings of the ethology tribe<sup>5</sup> – and develops a theme that has long been a part of the anthropological tradition. This is that "man" throughout most of history was basically a hunter – to quote from Washburn: "In a very real sense our intellect, emotions, interests and basic social life – all are evolutionary products of the success of the hunting adaptation" (in Lee and Devore, *Man the Hunter*, 1968).

This hypothesis leads Ardrey inevitably to suggest and stress certain themes:

1. Human beings are essentially "killers" or predators. "Man is man," Ardrey writes, "because we killed for a living." Aggression and dominance hierarchies are intrinsic to the human species – indeed to primitive communities generally. "There does not exist a truly egalitarian society."
2. "Exclusive hunting territories" were a survival necessity for our hunting ancestors.
3. The ancestral dependence on hunting led to a rigid sexual division within society, the men forming a hunting band who foraged daily, while the women remained in a localised area, immobilised by the necessities of child care.

These three basic themes are interconnected, and lead Ardrey to suggest that the solidarity of male groups

becomes a functional prerequisite for survival, that women depend entirely on men as the providers of food, that the hunting band is hierarchically organised, and that the hunting of large game animals constitutes the basic diet.

Ardrey admits – but of course does not emphasise – that this is a "speculative reconstruction of the human past"; but what is of interest is the nature of the evidence he essays to develop his theory. One would have thought that in order to establish such a thesis, Ardrey would try to sift the historical and anthropological data relating to human hunter-gatherers, past and present, and in all latitudes. But, interestingly, he doesn't. No serious anthropologist has ever argued that contemporary foraging peoples are "living fossils" which exemplify the mode of life of peoples in the Pleistocene era – but nevertheless the evidence they provide is surely helpful in trying to understand the social life of humans in the pre-Neolithic period. It is certainly more pertinent than the habits of warblers and predatory mammals. Ardrey gives the impression that the study of social predators like the lion, hyena, and wolf gives us more insights into the nature of the human species who have foraged in the forests, savannahs, plains, and deserts of all parts of the world. Ardrey is selective in choosing evidence to establish his thesis, and assumes that our forebears lived entirely under conditions similar to those experienced by the Kaska, Chippewayan, and Copper Eskimos in Arctic Canada. Of course, under such severe conditions hunting would indeed be a primary activity; but this hardly matches the ecological terrain or the climate under which the majority of human beings have lived and worked.

Even when Ardrey does choose to discuss contemporary hunter-gatherers his approach is selective or dismissive. He outlines Turnbull's study of the Ik people of East Africa, though admitting that this small fraction of humanity is hardly adequate material on which to



base generalisations about humanity at large. Nevertheless he spends three pages discussing their “Hobbesian world,” while referring to the “peaceful, gentle, non-aggressive” Tasadays in two lines.<sup>6</sup> Even more significant, Ardrey devotes no discussion at all to the other community studied by Turnbull, the Mbuti people of Zaire, whose sexual egalitarianism and mode of foraging runs completely counter to his thesis. I am not suggesting that the Mbuti exemplify a pre-Neolithic State of Nature; but if one is going to “reconstruct” our hunter-gathering past, surely they offer more relevant data than those innocent killers, the hyenas, who may indeed have been our competitors in a bygone age in one part of the world.

It is not my purpose to discuss human

foragers, in that the majority of the food gathered consisted of vegetable products. This is the case even among communities where there is a stress on male solidarity and hunting, as recorded among the Hadza by James Woodburn. His pioneer studies Ardrey finds convenient to ignore. Yet, since they were a nomadic community (now settled) living on the East African savannah (the cradle of the human species?), one would have thought they would have been of particular interest to Ardrey. Among the Hadza, only about 20 per cent of the food intake was derived from hunting, and this seems typical of hunter-gatherers generally. Only among people living in Arctic climes can hunting be said to be a primary activity; and there is no reason to think it was any different in the past.

rather quaint impression Ardrey has of hunter-gatherers, women do not spend their time gathering leafy greens. What surprised me when I lived among a group of South Indian foragers was that they rarely – very rarely – collected leafy vegetables at all. Such foods tend to be important in agricultural communities as relish, a meat-substitute, to make the basic staple – rice, maize, or yams – more palatable. For hunter-gatherers, collecting such foods is a waste of time.

In collecting the basic vegetables, women often wander many miles, and there is an equal chance among some hunter-gatherers of finding the men hanging around the camp looking after the children – or even children looking after children – as of finding women. In fact the very idea of “home” is disturbing to some hunter-gatherers like the Hadza, who assert no territorial rights over land, and who have a pervasive belief that to stay too long in any one spot leads to illness. In pre-Neolithic times this may well have been the case.

The “hunting band” consisting essentially of adult males, which Ardrey feels is a functional necessity for survival, is again by no means the norm among hunter-gatherers. Communal hunts, as among the Mbuti, tend to involve all members of the community – men, women, and children – or else hunting involves two or three men only, or more commonly a man on his own or with a small boy. An all-male band (Ardrey and his friends?) tramping through the savannah after the “dangerous prey” is hardly conducive to a successful hunt. Moreover, game animals taken tend to be on the small size; indeed, as ecologists have indicated, the large herds of ungulates now characteristic of the East African savannah, where Ardrey understandably puts a focal emphasis, cannot be considered pristine, but are largely a function of many centuries of pastoralism.

As for the stress on male bonding, what is of interest is that among many



(or is it male?) aggression, or the idea with which it is intrinsically linked – namely that we are a species of Killer Ape. Writers like Elaine Morgan have already offered some cogent criticisms of this perspective. I want to focus on the Hunting Hypothesis and its relation to the division of the sexes, and thereby offer some other criticisms of Ardrey’s study.

From the evidence we have, it is clear that most hunter-gathering communities of the past were largely

Equally important is the fact that the bulk of the food is gathered not by men but by women. Among hunter-gatherers they do not stay at “home” tending children, but are actively engaged in productive pursuits, collecting roots, nuts or seeds – as they still are in most tribal communities, where women do much of the agricultural work. It is these vegetable products rather than meat which provide the community with its basic calories. Contrary to the



hunter-gatherers there is no necessary stress on hunting as a form of prestige or as a focus of cult groups. In fact Patricia Draper has recently emphasised with respect to the !Kung of the Kalahari that the meat a man collects is shared according to social rules among all members of the camp, the man having very little control over the meat he brings in (in Reiter, *Towards an Anthropology of Women*, 1975). Again, another point that surprised me about the Malapantaram of South India as that a man would return from a hunting trip without any explicit indication of whether or not it had been a successful venture. Thus we find an interesting contrast between foraging and agricultural peoples; for what one tends to find is that the stress on male bonding, and the importance of hunting as a ritualised and prestigious activity associated exclusively with initiated (adult) men, occurs not among hunter-gatherers but among agricultural peoples – the Lele and Ndembu of Central Africa are examples, but one could cite many more.

One final point about Ardrey's Hunting Hypothesis, which has been stressed by many feminist writers, is that human evolution is viewed entirely from an androcentric standpoint, and assumes that what men do (or allegedly did) determines not only social patterns, but the psychology of the human species. If you seriously think about Ardrey's thesis in this light (leaving aside the ethnographic facts) the mythical nature of the Hunting Hypothesis is only too apparent.

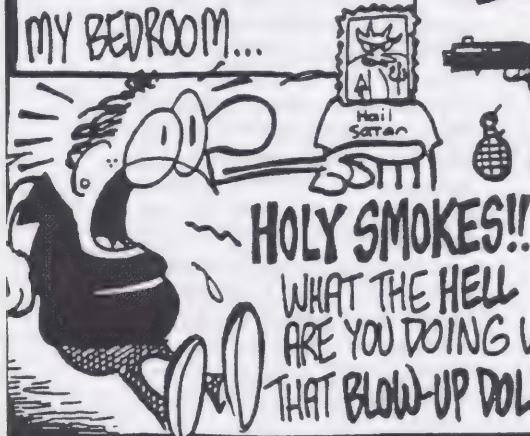
Malinowski suggested many decades ago that myths were "charters" for social action. What purpose then does Ardrey's myth serve? The answer is surely transparent. It is a justification for social and sexual inequities, and a disguised polemic against feminism and personal freedom. As such, it is contrary to the premises and ideals of Humanism as well as to the available facts of biology and anthropology.

## Endnotes

- 1 Editor's note: This review essay originally appeared in *The New Humanist* in 1979. Minor editorial alteration have been made.
- 2 Editor's note: E. O. Wilson (b. 1929), whose research specialization is ants, is the originator and popularizer of the transparently reactionary field of sociobiology. Marshall Sahlins, Stephen Jay Gould, and other progressive social scientists from the 1970s through the 1990s effectively demolished genetic determinism, the basis of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, but almost nobody pays attention to those cranks. Ideological justifications for aggression, hierarchy, and strict gender-based divisions of labor continue to bolster the partisans of class society, and they make sure the rest of us continue to be bombarded by them.
- 3 Editor's note: Not only was Ardrey (1908-1980) an early champion of the Hunting Hypothesis, he was also a proponent of the Killer Ape Theory, which suggests that (inter- and intra-species) aggression, an alleged requirement of meat-eating, somehow altered the brains of early hominids, leading to the distinct human branch of primates. Scavenging the kills of large predators by scaring them off – probably eventually with fire – is the more likely origin of carnivorous behavior in Australopithecines (the famous fossil Lucy). This sort of bluffing display behavior is observed among chimpanzees and gorillas: standing erect, chest-beating, branch shaking and dragging, hooting, and charging. Parallels with certain forms of human male antics are obvious.
- 4 Editor's note: Clastres (1934-1977) did his fieldwork in Paraguay among the Guayaki; his *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians*, based on his experiences in 1963-64, was finally published in English in 2000 by MIT Press. Formerly a student of the structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss, Clastres broke with his teacher, eventually repudiating the economic determinism of Marxist social theory. *The Archaeology of Violence*, a collection of his essays, was published by Semiotext(e) in 1979.
- 5 Editor's note: Ethology is the scientific study of animal behavior. Ethologists tend to examine a particular behavior across species in order to discover its underlying (that is, genetic) origins. An early topic – some might say obsession – was, notably, aggression. Originally associated with the work of former Nazi biologists Konrad Lorenz and Karl von Frisch, ethology has been championed by social conservatives such as Richard Dawkins, B. F. Skinner, and Desmond Morris as well as most sociobiologists. Some interesting insights about the early psychological developments of birds and mammals (for example the distinctions between instinct and learning) derive from ethology.
- 6 Editor's note: It's probably best that Ardrey didn't spend any more time and space on them. The Tasaday were purportedly a tribe of previously unknown and uncontacted Neolithic hunter-gatherers living in the remote rainforest of Mindanao. Upon their so-called discovery in 1971, the group – and their government handlers – gained international fame and garnered the attention of journalists as well as social scientists. Plagued by inconsistencies and contradictions (concerning language, caloric intake, remains of their ancestors, the lack of inbreeding, etc), ethnographers soon become suspicious. In 1976 the government defenders of the Tasaday decided that no further ethnographic study was to be permitted, and their "territory" was officially closed to all visitors. By 1986 the hoax had been definitively exposed.



IT ALWAYS AMAZES ME  
THE WAY PEOPLE REACT  
WHEN THEY FIRST ENTER  
MY BEDROOM...



HOLY SMOKES!!

WHAT THE HELL  
ARE YOU DOING WITH  
THAT BLOW-UP DOLL?!!



# THE K CHRONICLES

BY  
KEITH  
KNIGHT

FOLKS ARE OFTEN SUR-  
PRISED TO FIND A "FEEL  
ME UP WILBUR" DOLL IN  
MY BEDROOM...



ALTHOUGH  
I DON'T  
KNOW WHY...

TICKLE ME ELMO MAY BE THE #1  
DOLL FOR AMERICA AS A WHOLE, BUT  
FEEL ME UP WILBUR HAS BEEN SELL-  
ING LIKE HOTCAKES IN THE BLACK  
COMMUNITY...



THEY COME IN QUITE HANDY...

...ALTHOUGH NOT FOR THE USE  
THE MANUFACTURER HAD OR-  
IGINALLY INTENDED...



BUT WAIT!  
LOOK!!

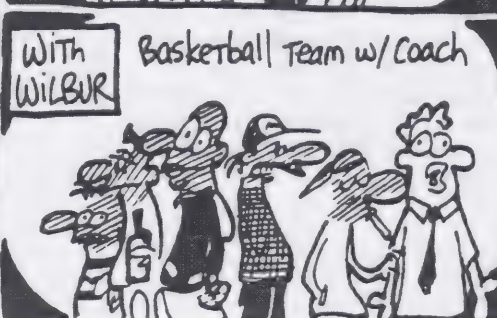
Blackman  
+ Whiteguy = okey!!

Get the hell  
in here,  
boys!!



Without  
WILBUR

GANG



With  
WILBUR

Basketball Team w/ Coach

THEY'RE BANNED IN BOSTON, SO  
I BOUGHT A FEW TO SEND TO MY  
FRIENDS BACK EAST... OH MY GAWD!!



LOOK!! IT'S  
HOOTIE & The  
Blowfish!!

STOP



# LETTERS

## **Anarchistische Bibliothek und Archiv Wien**

Jerchenfelder Straße 124-126  
1080 Wien Austria  
info@a-bibliothek.org

DEAR FRIENDS AND COMRADES,  
The Anarchist Library in Vienna has been operating for the last two years. We have a broad spectrum of books, pamphlets, journals and newspapers by anarchists and/or about anarchism and make them available to the general public.

Most of the aforementioned publications are currently in German language, however we trying to add current journals and newspapers in other languages. Our motivation in doing this is that we consider it important to keep informed about debates and struggles in other regions, and therefore stay open to new impulses.

This is the reason why we are writing to you. Do you have the interest and means to send us current copies of your publication? We would of

course also be grateful for any old copies for the archive. Unfortunately our financial means are very limited (as our project is entirely financed via private donations, and the Viennese anarchist movement is small), we would however do our possible to e.g. cover the postage costs.

Some additional information about the library: it is a consultation and lending library, in which also book presentations, workshops and exhibitions take place. An ongoing project of ours is to digitalize (old) newspapers and pamphlets and publish them online. These can be accessed on our website:  
<http://a-bibliothek.org>

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Notification to Inmate and Publisher/Sender of Rejected Publication  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Prisons  
(to be used when rejecting a publication under Section 2.a.-e. of PS 5266.11)

Inmate: Eric McDavid  
Register Number: 16209-097  
Institution: FCI, Terminal Island  
RE: Riot Porn Coloring book (2)  
The above-named publication/material from C.A.L. Press has been rejected in accordance with the Bureau's Program Statement Incoming Publications, which provides in part:

A publication may be rejected only if it is determined detrimental to the security, good order, or discipline of the institution or if it might facilitate criminal activity.

The above-name publication has been rejected because:

Coloring books on rioting

A copy of this notification has been sent to the publisher/sender, who may obtain an independent review of this rejection by writing to the Regional Director.

Inmates may seek review of this determination through the Administrative Remedy Program.

Robert E. McFadden, Western Region 7338 Shoreline Drive, Stockton, CA 95219

within twenty (20) days of receipt of that copy.

Conrad Graber, Warden

### *Lawrence responds:*

*It never ceases to amuse me that the screws in the mailrooms of various correctional institutions think they're protecting the security of their prisons by keeping certain reading material out. The Riot Porn coloring books were mailed in the same envelope with the last issue of Ajoda, which made it to Eric despite a long part two of "The Future of Insurrection" complete with photos of riots. It just goes to show the level of literacy among those charged with keeping the public safe from miscreants, rascallions, and the occasional ne'er do-well.*

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### **Send letters to:**

editor@anarchymag.org  
C.A.L. Press PO BOX 3448  
Berkeley, CA 94703





# HOW READY ARE YOU FOR THE COLLAPSE?

## 1. Do you have a plan for producing food post-collapse?

- ☐ You mean cooking?
- ☐ I belong to a CSA
- ☐ Collective farms will feed the masses
- ☐ We'll all be hunting & gathering

## 2. Have you participated in large scale decision making?

- ☐ My office votes on working lunches
- ☐ In my union
- ☐ Collapse can't happen without it
- ☐ Huh? Everything large scale will be collapsed

## 3. How will you get water?

- ☐ From the tap
- ☐ Grey water, rain barrels, and filters
- ☐ By self-managing the waterworks
- ☐ Rivers and streams, duh!

## 4. How will you shelter in the winter?

- ☐ At my house
- ☐ We have passive solar and a pellet stove
- ☐ We will expropriate public buildings
- ☐ We will migrate with the butterflies

## 5. To store food I will:

- ☐ Put it in my fridge
- ☐ Ferment, can, salt & root cellar
- ☐ Keep electricity going
- ☐ Still hunting & gathering

## 6. If the military declared martial law I would:

- ☐ Follow their directions
- ☐ Speak with them peaceably
- ☐ Organize a liaison committee to deal with it
- ☐ Leave with my tribe

## 7. Do you have weapons and training?

- ☐ I have a gun, but never shoot it
- ☐ Heavens No!
- ☐ We are forming a warriors guild
- ☐ Of course

## 8. In case of fire:

- ☐ Call 911
- ☐ We have a fire extinguisher in each room
- ☐ We have formed a volunteer fire department
- ☐ Let it burn

## 9. Do you believe you have the skills needed to survive post-collapse?

- ☐ There will be no collapse, ever
- ☐ We have a great set up
- ☐ Together we can stand united
- ☐ As a tribe, yes

## 10. Do you have a personal support network in place?

- ☐ That sounds like psychology
- ☐ We have good friends
- ☐ This isn't about the personal
- ☐ I am part of a thriving tribe

Check all that apply or write in your own answers. Mail us a copy at:

**C.A.L. Press - Questionnaire**  
**PO Box 3448**  
**Berkeley, CA 94703**

Rating scale for this questionnaire will be published in an upcoming issue.

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### "How Much of an Occupier Are You?"

Bubbles are numbered from the top to the bottom. For all questions, give yourself 1 point for choosing the first bubble, 2 for bubble two, 3 for bubble three, or 4 points for bubble four. If you answered more than one bubble in a question, give yourself the average value of the two answers.

Add all your points together for the survey.

If you wrote in your own answers subtract 1 point for each extra answer; you are unconfined by our bubbles! Use the chart below to see where you fall on our scale...

Totals	How Much of an Occupier Are You?
0-11	You are fully occupied with being a scumbag liberal... why are you reading this?
12-22	Warning: you are in danger of becoming spineless! Don't be seduced by offers of Comfort and Safety; they are your worst enemies.
23-33	Careful participation is nothing to be ashamed of. Really. I mean it.
34 +	Congratulations, you were a fully fledged Occu-Martyr! Your sacrifices have been duly noted by the proper authorities.



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